HERO STORIES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

SEYMOUR LOVE CANE

Jura Jaffar

Master Aubrey Taffar
from,
Mrs E. M. Monroe Jr.

When he recited
the Childs Catechism
at age of three years.
April 21, 1921

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FROM THE
OLD TESTAMENT

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DAVID THE SHEPHERD LAD

HERO STORIES

FROM THE

OLD TESTAMENT

Retold for Young People by

SEYMOUR LOVELAND

Illustrated with half-tone reproductions of paintings by famous artists

RAND McNALLY & COMPANY

CHICAGO NEW YORK

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To

F. M. H.

Whose faith in the spirit of the stories and whose appreciation has been of great encouragement to the author, this book is dedicated.

THE INTRODUCTION

A well-known writer on how to study the Bible was asked to give in the fewest words possible the best method. His reply was, "Think."

Professor Royce of Harvard University, lecturing in Chicago, made the statement: "Children think, adults do not." Taking this statement with a grain of salt, we who are familiar with the child mind are forced to admit that children think so logically that the philosophy of the learned has frequently been challenged by them. They also have a keen sense of continuity, clearness of judgment amounting almost to harshness, and an unsparing and impersonal idea of justice.

To those young thinkers and to the unspoiled minds of adults these stories are submitted with the hope that they may inspire a continually increasing love for that most wonderful book, the Bible.

While writing these stories I have had in mind all young people, but the intelligence of the child more than the age will determine the interest of the story for each individual. The stories are not written for *childish* but for *childlike* minds, both qualities being found in all, whether youth or adult.

Realizing that Scripture is a volume filled to the brim with living principles, and that to be without it, or to lose faith in the Bible's really enormous practical value when applied to daily experience, is a sad loss, I have striven in these stories so to present Biblical characters and their history to both child and adult that they may have a gripping hold on both interest and attention.

Each story is complete in itself, but a theme runs through them as a whole which is best appreciated if they are arranged and read chronologically. As a whole they portray the gradual

development of Israel from idolatry to the conception of God as shown in the life of the Messiah.

The Scriptural text followed is that of the AMERICAN STANDARD REVISED VERSION, with possibly some half dozen exceptions, those exceptions being quotations from Ferrar Fenton, whose translation of the Bible is one of rare and ripe scholarship.

Historical facts have been gleaned from leading authorities, as also allusions to persons, customs, and countries. Every statement in these stories has been made after the leaders of modern scholarship have been consulted. The authorities have been of every shade of opinion and of no opinion. My own independent study and research in Bible themes has covered a period of some forty years.

THE AUTHOR

THE CONTENTS

PAGE

GOD HEARD 1
The Story of Hagar and Ishmael

A LADDER THAT REACHED THE SKY 13
Jacob's Dream

HIS LITTLE SISTER 33
Miriam and Moses

THE DOOR NO ONE CAN OPEN 46
The Turning Back of Israel from the Promised Land

OPENED EYES 66
Balaam Cursing Israel

THE SCARLET CORD 81
Rahab and the Spies

IS IT TRUE? 100
Ruth and Naomi

THE LITTLE MAID OF GILEAD 127
Jephthah's Daughter

WHAT A LITTLE BOY TAUGHT A BIG MAN 148
Samuel and Eli

HOW HE WON 166
The Story of David and Goliath

THE BOOMERANG 181
Solomon and the Queen of Sheba

THE ONLY ONE 200
The Flight of Elijah

WHAT HAVE YOU IN THE HOUSE? 216
The Pot of Oil

PAGE

WHY THE WATERS OF JORDAN? 227
Healing of Naaman the Leper

WHEN HEZEKIAH WENT TO CHURCH 242
Hezekiah's Prayer for Deliverance

TWICE TWO IS FIVE 259
The Fall of Jerusalem and the Fiery Furnace

AT THE KING'S TABLE 281
Daniel and the King's Officer

MEASURED 292
Belshazzar's Feast

HAGAR AND ISHMAEL IN THE DESERT

HERO STORIES
FROM THE
OLD TESTAMENT

GOD HEARD

THE STORY OF HAGAR AND ISHMAEL

It was a great day for all the family. Such stirring about as there was, getting everything ready for the guests who had been bidden to the feast. Sarah, the mother, was busy in the tent making loaves of bread. She kneaded the dough, then cut it in pieces and rolled them thin and round until they looked like the covers to the sugar jars in your pantry. Each guest was to have three of these loaves, and they must be freshly baked for the evening meal. When all was ready for the baking, she put the loaves between — As I shall ask you to be a guest with me at this banquet, it is wisest for me not to tell you how she baked them. Though you may be one of the most courteous of young people and know how guests should behave when

invited out to a dinner, I'm afraid your face would express disgust when one of these loaves was offered to you. In those days—and today also for that matter—there were different ways to bake bread, but unfortunately, the very best way for the Oriental is in our eyes the very worst.

Everyone was in holiday spirits. Donkey boys were feeding their charges an extra portion of fodder, and instead of giving them the usual kick were actually stroking their sides. Even the surly camels seemed to have caught the spirit of joy, for they had stopped fighting among themselves and lay quietly, contentedly chewing their cuds, and forgetting to nip the hand of their keeper as he passed them. Out in the pasture the little kids kicked up their heels as they frisked about their sedate mothers, who were attending to the serious business of eating their morning meal. True, they looked wonderingly at some men moving about among the flock. Every now and then a man would seize a particularly lively kid and throw it across his shoulders. Poor little kids! A big fire was being built and a spit made ready to hold the

limp bodies that hung so lifelessly across the mens' shoulders.

In the evening there was to be a great feast. Kids must be roasted, bread baked, corn parched, and porridge mixed so that every guest should have plenty. Ointment must be at hand with which to anoint the beards of the venerable men, and many jars of fresh water must be ready so that every visitor might have his feet washed.

Some of you are exclaiming, "What, wash the guest's feet! Doesn't everyone at a party have clean feet?"

Yes, in your day. Remember you wear shoes and walk on dry pavements. But in the time of our story such a thing as a stocking was unknown, and a sandal covering only the sole of the foot and fastened to toe or ankle was all that was ever worn on the foot. When people traveled a long distance, walking up and down hill, through mud or dust, through wet marshes or over dry desert sands, they were weary and footsore, and the feet were not pleasant to look at when the journey's end was reached. So you see it was very refreshing to the guest and a

mark of respect on the part of the host to have his visitors' feet washed.

Our dinner party was in the age when the world was new and the day of history had just begun to dawn. Schools and houses there were none, for the people roamed about so much that tents which could be easily carried were the most convenient things to live in. The father, the head of the family, was both king and priest until, as its members increased, there grew a tribe and then a nation. In those long-ago times there were no conveniences. People had to walk perhaps half a mile for a jar of water, or, still worse, they might have to journey a day or more before finding a spring or well. Their cattle, their bondmen and bondwomen, their camels, goats, and sheep made up their wealth. Yes, they had gold and silver, but as there was so little to buy there was not much need of those metals.

Do you remember getting out of your warm bed in the chill of early morning, and do you recall how every object was blurred, veiled in the gray morning-mist? And as you gazed out of your window a solitary, shadowy figure

passing along the dim, misty street gave you a queer feeling as though something strange were happening. So things appeared in the early morning time of history. Commonplace happenings in those days seemed unusual events.

The day on which our story opens meant much to Abraham, the father of the household. He sat in the door of his tent holding a little lad between his knees and softly stroking his hair as the child looked lovingly into his face. Little Isaac was about three years old, had just been weaned, and the feast of the evening was to be given in his honor. Soon his mother, Sarah, appeared, holding out to Isaac a tempting morsel of bread; then, taking him from his father's arms, she hailed a slender, dark-eyed boy passing the tent leading a donkey. "Ishmael, let Isaac have a ride on your donkey," she said.

The boy stopped and, placing the child astride the animal's back, led the donkey out into the pasture. The baby clapped his hands in glee, but not once did a smile from Ishmael reward the little fellow's efforts to be friendly.

"How disagreeable he must have been!" some of you are saying. But wait before you

judge. It is so much easier and far more comfortable to be smiling and happy that when we see a face that cannot light up with a smile we may be sure there is some reason for it. Perhaps if we knew the reason we would think kindly instead of being severe.

Possibly some of you can remember being told one day that your nose was broken; and when you indignantly denied it, you were shown a shapeless bundle of flannel out of which peeped a small red face—the face of the new brother or sister. Gradually you began to realize that the newcomer was getting a great deal of the attention that used to be yours. If you remember such an experience you can sympathize with Ishmael. He was Abraham's eldest son, and his mother was Hagar, the Egyptian bondwoman, Sarah's maid. In the time of our story a man had more than one wife, and one usually was loved much more than the others. Abraham loved Sarah, the free woman, more, much more, than the bondmaid Hagar.

Surely two persons among the merrymakers at the feast were not happy. Hagar's heart

must have burned with a sense of injustice. Was not her boy, Ishmael, Abraham's son, and was he not entitled to some attention? Had she not been promised that her son should found a great nation and inherit some of Abraham's wealth? Why this feast for the child Isaac? Were she and her son to be neglected before the guests?

With such thoughts in her mind it is not surprising that Hagar looked cross and forbidding as she served her master and mistress and their friends. Ishmael caught his mother's spirit and rebelled against all the attention and praise being given to his baby half-brother. Abraham and Sarah with their guests gave all their praise to the little Isaac, for God had promised Abraham, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called."

Ishmael could no longer control his hot temper, and with scornful laughter he ridiculed the guests and their praise of Isaac.

Sarah, never very kind to Hagar or Ishmael, rose to her feet, her face darkened with anger as she spitefully demanded of Abraham, "Cast out this handmaid and her son: for the son of

this handmaid shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac."

The guests, awed by her jealous fury, were silent, and Abraham, really tender-hearted, at first objected to her command. Was it possible that Sarah could not see that there was enough for both the boys? Did she not realize that the son of a free woman would of course have the better and larger share? The bondmaid had done no harm: she had been faithful in her service. Why deprive her and her son of the portion which belonged to them? These must have been Abraham's thoughts, for the Bible states that he was grieved because of Sarah's demand.

But at last he yielded. Abraham must have thought that the dreary desert with God to care for them, was safer than his household over which was a jealous woman determined that neither Hagar nor Ishmael should share anything with Isaac.

When morning came again, and the star of dawn still hung in the heavens, Abraham arose and called Hagar. He had to tell her that she and her son must go, that no longer could his

home and that of Sarah shelter both her boy and the little Isaac.

Hagar pressed her lips tightly together and fire shot from her eyes. But she was silent as she received the water-filled skin which served for a bottle, and not only her shoulders but Ishmael's were heavy laden with the bread Abraham gave them. Side by side, deserted by everything human, they turned their faces toward the wilderness. Their footsteps, at first quickened because of anger at the wrong done them, grew slower and slower as the home which had sheltered them faded from view and the wilderness with its unknown terrors lay before them.

The sun rose higher and higher in the heavens; its heat made the stones of the earth hot. The bottle of water was soon empty; not that they had drunk so much, but on a hot day skin bottles sweat even more than our earthen and silver pitchers, and the water had evaporated rapidly and dried the skin.

Ishmael's endurance was at an end. True, he was about sixteen years old, but he had always had tender care, and plenty. The hours

spent in this burning wilderness with little shade and no water were beginning to tell on his strength. His thirst was unbearable; his lips were blistered, and already his swollen tongue so filled his mouth that speech was impossible. He stumbled and fell. His mother raised him to his feet and again he took a few steps forward. Once more he fell, this time rising with greater difficulty, only to totter feebly for a step or two and then to fall face downward upon the ground.

Hagar's face, drawn and white, was piteous in its despair as she dragged his limp body close to some scanty shrubbery. There she left him that she might not hear his hopeless call for water nor be present when his eyes should close forever. Then she bowed her head and burst into agonized weeping. It seemed to help her. She grew calm and seemed to be listening. Yes, in the quiet, after her grief was spent, there was in her heart a voice speaking; and into her mind there came the remembrance of God's care and his promise that Ishmael should be the father of a great nation. What was it the voice said?

"What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thy hand; for I will make him a great nation."

She looked around her. Had anger and fear so filled her mind that she had forgotten this desolate place was the wilderness of Beer-sheba, a bleak, uninhabited tract, but possessing many wells of refreshing water? Then God opened her eyes, and she saw—what she might have seen before—a well of water. Quickly rising, she filled the bottle and held it to the boy's lips. Oh, that refreshing drink! that clear, life-giving draught of sparkling water! Do you wonder that Isaiah, the prophet, likening trust in God to a well of living water, said, "God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for Jehovah, even Jehovah, is my strength and song; and he is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

As the evening shadows fell, Hagar and Ishmael ate their remaining bread and made themselves comfortable for the night. God had heard; His promise had been kept. Water had

come to them in their distress and now, although alone, friendless, without shelter, they felt at rest. Hagar knew that when morning should come again, the God who had opened her eyes to see the well would also guide her feet to a home for her child and for herself.

Ishmael remained always a dweller in the wilderness. What to others was nothing but a barren waste became to him a home and country. In the wilderness he and Hagar found every need supplied. Cast out from one home, they walked straightway into another. It was in this wilderness that Ishmael founded the nation God had promised him. He was always a wanderer but never without home or kindred. The Arabs of today as they pitch their tents in the desert will tell you they are the children of Ishmael. Could we draw aside the curtain of years which hide these ages so long past, and could we speak with these two people deserted by man but blessed by God, I am sure each one would tell us that faith in God makes every good thing possible.

A LADDER THAT REACHED THE SKY

JACOB'S DREAM

"I wish I had a ladder that reached the sky. Then I would go up to the top and see what was there." So said a boy whose eyes sparkled with delight after an evening's talk and study of the stars. That was many years ago. The boy is a man now, and it may be that he has found a ladder such as he desired.

For there *are* ladders that reach the sky, many of them—no, not made of wood which you have to climb, but very much better and safer, for they have this advantage, there is no danger of falling off and getting hurt.

Did you ever visit an observatory and look at the moon through a telescope? Did n't your breath come in little gasps of astonishment as the great ladder of glass let your eyes climb to the sky and pry into the moon's secrets? The telescope is one kind of a ladder, and a fine one; but there is another and better one. It is of this one that I am going to tell you. A boy

found it and used it, and when you read about him you will know how to find such a ladder for yourself.

His name was Jacob, and he lived before there was any such thing as a king or a queen or a president. There was no government at all except the law which the head of the family made for himself and his children and all his descendants. It was what was called the patriarchal age. Then all the different relatives lived together as one large family, or tribe, and were ruled by the father, or possibly the great-grandfather, of them all. His word was law. No one ever thought of disputing it. His sons, themselves often white-haired men, obeyed him as a little three-year-old child obeys its parents today.

In the "beginning time," as we call the patriarchal age, there were no priests and no churches. Each family had its own altar, around which the family gathered while the father, or the eldest son if the father were absent, performed the service.

Upon the death of the father the eldest son succeeded him in authority, receiving a double

share of his property. It was the same then as it is now in countries where there are kings; when the king dies his eldest son becomes the ruler, and this son's brothers and sisters become his subjects and must obey him. To be the first-born son — girls did n't count — and to have all the privileges of the first-born was often coveted by the younger sons.

The two boys of our story were twins, and as different from each other as black is from white. Their mother had no difficulty in telling them apart for they did n't look alike. Esau, the first-born twin, was strong and sturdy and a great hunter, while Jacob, the younger, was a quiet but keen-witted boy and not very strong. Esau was rough and hairy, but Jacob's skin was smooth and soft. Of course Rebecca, their mother, loved Jacob more than she did his sturdier brother. What mother does not feel more tenderly toward the child she thinks is weaker than the others?

Their father, Isaac, a gentle and kindly old man, took great pride in the strength and power of his elder son, Esau, and often went with him to the fields to hunt. Esau was a

most successful hunter, and was never afraid even of the fierce wild beasts that he often met while he was chasing the harmless wild animals.

Sometimes he was away from home for days at a time, digging pits in the ground or setting traps by which he caught the deer. He carried nets with him by which he snared the birds, and of course always remembered to take his bow and his quiver full of arrows.

In those "beginning days" there was no convenient market around the corner where one might buy a juicy steak or tender chop and have dinner ready in half an hour. In those days when anyone was hungry for meat, he usually had to go out and hunt for it, and then kill and dress the animal before it was ready for the cook. Think of waiting a week before you could begin to get the dinner!

You ask why people did not use the sheep and cattle from their own flocks and herds instead of hunting wild game? Sometimes the domestic animals were killed for food, but not often. Remember that a man's wealth in those days was counted by the number of sheep,

goats, camels, and cattle he possessed and also by the number of slaves he owned.

"What about the land?" you ask. The people moved about so much with their tents and cattle that very few of them owned much land. They had not reached the "settling down" age. Their goats and cattle gave them milk and butter; their goat skins made warm mantles and soft beds. Then, too, their sheep and goats were often slaughtered for their religious services. The wild animals were plentiful and did not have to be fed or cared for; they cost the people nothing but the labor necessary to hunt them.

Esau had been away on one of his hunting trips and had caught nothing. Perhaps the deer had broken his nets and he had found his traps and pitfalls empty, or the birds may have flown so high that his arrows could not reach them. Days away from home and nothing to take back with him! No doubt he was ashamed to return and face his father, who was so proud of him, and who loved to eat the savory food made from the venison Esau brought him. Sleeping in mountain caves or out in the open

fields wet with the falling dew was a strain on the strongest hunter. Esau must have been so chilled that even the noonday sun did not warm him. Added to this was his disappointment at getting nothing for his toil. Enough to make anyone tired and weak, was it not?

He turned slowly homeward, very different from the happy hunter who with springing steps usually returned laden with game. His eyes must have lighted up with pleasure when he saw Jacob sitting in the door of his tent eating his meal of red lentil pottage, with possibly a bit of meat in it and flavored with onions. Jacob was a thrifty fellow, with always enough and to spare. He would take pity on his hungry brother and share his dinner with him, thought Esau, as he hastened his steps and greeted Jacob.

"Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint," said Esau.

Jacob looked at him coldly. There was no sympathy for his brother in his face or voice as he replied, "Sell me first thy birthright."

What an astonishing request! Who but Jacob would ever have thought of buying a birthright?

Esau had often made fun of his brother and his quiet habits. Sometimes he had felt contempt for his timid twin, whose only weapons were his shepherd's sling and his staff. But the hunter was hungry; he was now the weak one and Jacob the strong. Jacob's work had been protecting the weak, while Esau's had been slaying the strong and the fierce. We shall see which made the stronger man of the two, the one whose courage slew wild beasts or the one who cared for the gentle sheep.

Esau, glorying in his great physical strength and the power it gave him, recognizing no other force but that which belonged to his muscles, was impatient. He must have whatever he wanted at once or he was likely to forget that he wanted it. But Jacob was used to waiting. Out under the silent stars when he guarded his sheep at night he must have learned the lesson of patience.

Yes, Jacob had used his thoughts while Esau had used his muscles, and each had grown in his different way. Now the mighty hunter was sick with hunger. This frightened him and he answered:

"Behold, I am about to die; and what profit shall the birthright do to me?" Besides, he may have thought, the blessing of the birthright is a long way off, and this good dinner is right at hand.

Foolish Esau! The present is but for a moment, the birthright is for a lifetime. Why can't you learn from the brother you despise as feeble? Jacob would not want the birthright if it were worthless. The very fact that he values it should teach you its worth.

But no, Esau rushed headlong into the trap Jacob had set for him. He vowed to his brother that he would give up the right of the first-born, and sat comfortably down to his mess of pottage.

From each of the brothers we turn sadly away—from Jacob, who saw in his brother's need only an opportunity for his own selfish gain, and from Esau, who had no thought for the responsibility of his birthright and the duties which went with it. He traded it for a moment's pleasure as readily as a baby would drop a diamond and grasp eagerly at a scarlet pebble.

But the reckoning time came to each. Isaac, their father, was growing old and wished to give Esau the blessing due the first-born. Esau made himself ready to receive it. He had forgotten his bargain with Jacob—forgotten that, according to that bargain, he had forfeited the blessing. Even had Esau remembered that he had sold his birthright, he who knew no other way of settling a difficulty except with a sword, probably felt that his peaceful brother Jacob would not contend with him. Again did Esau make a great mistake. His fists were powerful, but they could not battle against Jacob's wits.

Jacob, with the help of his mother, Rebekah, cheated his brother out of the blessing by a trick, and his father bestowed on him the rights of the first-born.

Esau was angry, bitterly angry, at the fraud his brother had practiced, and threatened to kill Jacob as soon as their father should die. Rebekah was badly frightened when she heard Esau's threat. In haste she called Jacob and told him to go at once to his uncle Laban's home in Paddan-aram.

"Tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away; until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which thou hast done to him; then I will send and fetch thee from thence; why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?"

Rebekah knew her elder son's nature. Esau was quickly angry and as quickly over it. Whatever he said or did was hasty. Esau acted twice before he thought, whereas Jacob thought once, twice, and probably many times before he acted.

Poor mother! That which she feared came upon her. The tricks she had used to keep her sons separated them forever from her.

Rebekah had been obliged to make some excuse to get Jacob away from home, so she had said to Isaac, and probably to curious neighbors: "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these, of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?" Then Jacob's father had said to him, "Go to Paddan-aram . . . . and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's

brother." And Jacob went, after receiving from his father an added blessing.

Rebekah would not have smiled so brightly the morning she kissed Jacob good-by had she known that she was never to look upon his face again. She must have stood and watched as he made his way across the plain that she might see him wave his staff just before he disappeared among the shadows of the rocks. It was a long, tedious journey from Beer-sheba, Jacob's home, to the home of his uncle in Paddan-aram, and one beset by many dangers for a lonely traveler.

Although Jacob's friends and neighbors probably called him dutiful, he knew better. He was being driven from home through fear of his brother. He saw that the birthright he had bought, instead of at once giving him the ease and comfort of the eldest son, had really cost him his home and made him a wanderer. He was a thinker, but he had to learn what King Solomon said years afterward: "Guard ever your thoughts with all care, for from them come the issues of life."[1]

[1] Ferrar Fenton

He had quite as much contempt for his brother Esau as that brother had for him. Esau cares for nothing but physical things, thought Jacob; he is rash and hasty and uses his sword too often.

Yes, Jacob, but your brother has used his strength honestly. In that he is better than you who have used your strength dishonestly. You have not yet heard the commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain." That means, you shall not misuse any gift which God has bestowed upon you. You have used your head, while Esau the light-hearted has used his fists. But you, with the birthright you have bought, are an outcast, while Esau rests safely at home.

The journey was long, the way often rough and dangerous. The gleaming eyes of hungry beasts that prowled close to his nightly fires, and the howls of wolves eager for their prey, kept Jacob awake at night. By daylight, men, often more cruel than the beasts, might attack him unless he was so fortunate as to fall in with a slowly-moving caravan. Now and then a solitary traveler would overtake him and offer

him a ride upon his camel. Then their ways would part and Jacob would be left alone again.

One evening, weary and heartsick, he paused to rest. The place seemed safe and free from fierce wild beasts. It would make, he thought, a good place to sleep for the night. He built his fire and shivered as he held his hands out toward the blaze. The sun had set, and long shadows began to creep along the ground; the hills were throwing their blanket over the valley for the night. What was more natural than that Jacob should be thinking of his mother! It was the hour when the family would be eating their evening meal and laughing gaily as they sat around the overflowing bowl which contained their supper, and into which they dipped their hands as they helped themselves. He closed his eyes to make the vision more real, but the howl of a wolf from the distant rocks and the scream of a lone wild bird roused him from his reverie and made him realize his solitude.

Of what was he thinking? That the birthright for which he had so carefully planned had so far brought him only misery. He was

beginning to see that God's gifts cannot be bought; they must be earned.

According to oriental custom, he could not give back the birthright. It was his, and he must keep it. Hard as it weighed upon him, he knew that he must give his life for the purchase he had made.

How? Wait, the story will tell us.

The place where he camped was rough, stony ground, but it was better than the dampness of the field. He found a stone which would make him a pillow, and, resting his head upon it, he fell asleep—then he found the ladder.

"But that was only a dream," some of you may say.

What matters it? If one finds in a dream that for which he is looking, is it not as good as finding it in the waking hours? Of what had he been thinking when he lay down to sleep? Turn back in the story and it will tell you. He was beginning to see what you will remember the prophet Micah said years afterward: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness?"

Birthrights were nothing. It was character which counted. Jacob, the homesick wanderer, knowing that he needed to be shown a better way than the one he had tried, was then taught of God.

"And he dreamed; and, behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, Jehovah stood above it."....

Tortured and tormented as he had been by fear of his brother, obliged to make this journey which exposed him to the many dangers from which he shrank, Jacob learned in his dream that earth is not after all so very far from heaven. God's presence, as a ladder reaching from heaven to earth, is over all. "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool."

The mean thoughts of envy and selfish love of gain were being stilled as the messengers of God descending and ascending whispered to him of kindliness, mercy, and truth.

Yes, Jacob knew that the God who had called Abraham and had blessed his father, Isaac, was now speaking to him, and into his softened

heart there crept the certainty of the promise: "I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham thy father and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

"Be blessed!" There must be some change in him before he could be a source of blessing. So far he had blessed neither his own family nor himself. He was a fugitive from home and dared not return. He had gone out with the curse of his brother's hatred resting upon him. But he meant to return, and if God would be with him in his home-coming, that return should be a blessing to all. He had thought only of himself and his own gain, until into his awakened heart there crept a desire—faint at first, but it was there—to be of use to others.

God promised more to Jacob than the land upon which he slept. His descendants should not only inherit all this beautiful country but He also assured Jacob that Jehovah his God

should always be with him. "And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

The vision faded. Jacob awoke, but he was a very different man from the Jacob who fell asleep. The loneliness and grief had gone, and a trust in a Power higher than any he had ever known was comforting him.

"Surely," he said, "Jehovah is in this place; and I knew it not . . . . this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

The sun was just peeping over the hilltops when Jacob arose and began to get ready for his day's travel. The morning air smelled sweet and fresh; everything seemed happy and gay. Had he been David, he would have said,

"The mountains skipped like rams,
The little hills like lambs."

The birds were singing, and as the sun rose higher it shot its golden rays directly across the stone which he had used for his pillow, making it glitter and sparkle in the sunshine. Jacob

lifted it up and, drawing a flask from the pouch he carried, he poured oil upon it and made a vow to Jehovah: "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, and Jehovah will be my God, then this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

"There he is bargaining again," I hear some of you say. But remember, his good resolutions are new. Do you expect him to be perfect at once? Why, that is more than we ourselves do. The people we find between the leaves of our Bible are like us, and in them we see ourselves as though we were looking in a mirror. Do you say Jacob hasn't changed any? Read again the vow he made to Jehovah. What did he promise?

"I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

Think of it, the grasping Jacob, whose eyes have looked with no pity on another when that other's need could be turned to his own gain! The small, narrow soul which wished only to

get something is beginning to think of *giving*, and that generously.

From this time on Jacob's life was one of service. It was in this way that he had to give his life. For twenty years he served his uncle Laban, fourteen years for his wives, Leah and Rachel, and six years for his flocks and herds. Yes, he did wrong during those twenty years, but he never forgot the lesson of the ladder — the love of God means service.

In serving, Jacob earned the birthright he had bought. Through service he at last deserved it. Esau with his sword became the conqueror of another people and drove them from their land and country. On him the blessing could not rest. Jacob in blessing others was blessed himself; in serving others he himself was served.

Twenty years was he away from home. The lessons of those years were often hard and bitter, but through them all he served. The ladder which reaches from earth to sky is service — giving instead of getting.

Jacob had caught a glimpse of the heavenly ladder. Years afterward the seed of Jacob,

in whom should all the families of the earth be blessed, said on the sunny slopes of the Judean hills, "I am in the midst of you as he that serveth."

HIS LITTLE SISTER

MIRIAM AND MOSES

Two small figures crept cautiously along the banks of the river. The banks were wet and marshy and their bare feet sank into the muddy slime. Splash! What was that? The girl drew the boy down beside her as she crouched low to hide herself and him among the tall, thick reeds. But it was nothing—only a bird flapping its wings in some shallow pool near by. The boy was wet and tired. He was but three years old and his little feet had dragged themselves through these rank marshes all day. Often his lips quivered as he looked up at his sister, and great tears silently rolled down his baby cheeks. Not a sound did he utter. No, little Aaron knew better than to cry. He and his sister and his parents were slaves. A sound from him and the Egyptians would know where he was, and even his baby heart knew what that meant. Had he not seen his father brutally whipped because he had not furnished his masters with all the bricks they had told him to make—that father who already staggered under

labor that was too severe for him? Once, too, he had hidden his face in his mother's lap so that he should not see a young lad bound to the ground with feet upturned while the cruel bastinado or stick had beaten the naked soles until they bled, and the lad was whipped only because he had told the overseer that bricks could not be made without straw. It was the memory of these scenes that made the little fellow trudge silently on. Holding fast to his sister's gown with one hand, with the other he tightly clutched the hem of his loose cotton shirt, which, doubled up, held pieces of reeds he was carrying home to his mother. What she wanted of these coarse stalks he did not know, but he remembered that every time he had laid one in her hand she had kissed him.

As soon as the young girl was satisfied that it was a bird and not an Egyptian that had frightened her, she rose from the ground and went on breaking the great stalks of the tall reeds and putting them into the loose folds of the gown she wore. It was a very convenient dress, really a sack whose ample folds she could throw over her arm and use as a basket.

"We are nearly through, Aaron," she said to the boy, "and then we will go home to mother and eat some of that nice hot pottage."

"I don't want to come here any more," replied the child.

"No, we have enough reeds now—all that mother needs for the little boat she is making," answered his sister Miriam.

Farther and farther from the shore and into deeper water they waded, until Miriam, parting the bulrushes with both hands, looked out upon a quiet sheet of water. It was a peaceful little inlet away from the stronger current of the river.

Just the place in which to bathe, she thought, and it will be here that the princess will want to come for her bath. Reaching out her hands, she shook some reeds close by. Yes, they were firm and strong. The little boat could lie safely hidden among them and yet she could see it, for she was to watch and see what became of it. Miriam was a big girl. She must have been every day of ten years old, and that, for a little Jewish girl in those days, was almost a grown-up woman.

Satisfied that she had found the right place and that no more rushes could be crowded into their frocks, she caught the boy's hand in hers and together they sped swiftly homeward. Only once on their way did they dart behind some stones and wait for two surly, scowling Egyptians to pass.

"These Hebrews will do us harm if we do not destroy them," one of the men was saying angrily.

"They are more in number now than we are," added his companion.

"It is fortunate that Pharaoh ordered all of the Hebrew boy babies thrown into the river," replied the first spokesman.

"That and bitter slavery will soon rid us of them," they both exclaimed together as they passed out of sight.

As their angry voices died away in the distance, Miriam and little Aaron slipped from their hiding place and ran swiftly across the meadows to the mud hut they called their home. Their mother was at the door waiting for them, and her tired face lighted with a smile as Miriam, holding up the reeds she had

gathered, exclaimed, "We can finish the ark to-night and hide the baby as soon as the pitch dries!"

"The morning after to-morrow we will carry him to the river," said her mother.

"I have found a fine, safe spot in which to place the boat. The river cannot harm him there," Miriam added.

The little group entered the house and soon all were seated before a large pot of steaming-hot pottage. Aaron fell asleep while he was eating and was tucked away under some hairy goatskins. Hard ground beaten down firmly answered for his bed, with perhaps, if the family was especially fortunate, a few more of the rough skins under him.

* * * *

The night and another day passed. Then came evening, the last one in which the mother dared keep her child.

Miriam and her mother sat in the doorway, and started as two figures came toward them out of the darkness. But there was no reason for fear. The people were friends—just Puah and Shiphrah, the two kind Hebrew nurses.

One of them was carefully carrying a bundle which she unrolled before them.

"Oh, isn't he beautiful!" all exclaimed as the sleeping child, Moses, lay resting in her arms.

"Beautiful," said Shiphrah. "No baby in Israel is half so fair. The neighbors from every house, and even strangers, have begged me to show him to them."

"For three months we have hidden him," said Jochebed, his mother, "but I dare not do it longer. To-morrow he must be put in the boat I have made for him and be laid in the bulrushes in the river."

As she spoke there was sadness neither in her face nor in her voice. All looked at her, surprised to see shining in her eyes a light that did not mean fear.

"I have called upon our God," Jochebed said. "Day and night I sought His counsel, until one night when all was still, in my heart there spake His voice giving me my answer."

"To put the child in the river?" questions Puah. "Surely not!"

"Yes, but not to be destroyed," answered Jochebed.

THE FINDING OF MOSES AMONG THE BULRUSHES

"I have been told," said Shiphrah, "that Pharaoh's daughter grieves constantly because she has no child, and she has been married these many years."

"What has that to do with the baby?" inquired Puah.

Jochebed answered, "When I called upon God to help me and to save my child, he showed me the way. It was He who made me think of Pharaoh's daughter. It was He who showed me that if I hid the little one in the rushes, when the king's daughter came to bathe in the river she might find him and take him for her own."

"Surely no one can look at this child, fair before God, and not love him," they all said.

But Puah was not satisfied. It was dangerous, she thought, and besides, none of them was sure that Pharaoh's daughter would go near that spot or take pity on the baby if she did find him.

"The princess is an Egyptian and we are Hebrews. They have shown no mercy to us. Why do you expect it now?" Puah asked.

The mother heart of Jochebed knew more than Puah. Did she not know the charm that

lay in little helpless hands and trustful baby eyes? The princess desired a child. Jochebed's must be spared the death decreed by an envious king. God's answer to the longing hearts of both women would lie in the ark hidden in the reeds of the rushing river. Jochebed had made the boat of papyrus. It was a light material often used for little skiffs because it floated so easily and swiftly on the water. The Egyptians and many of the Hebrews believed that the papyrus was a charm against crocodiles, with which the river Nile at that time was overrun.

"Let me see the boat you have been making," said Puah.

From under some goatskins Jochebed drew a small boat. Inside and out it was lined and daubed with tar and asphalt. Mother love and the mother's faith had enabled her to melt and mix these substances and make water-tight the tiny skiff. Jochebed had used her eyes well. She had seen the Egyptians make boats of papyrus and had noticed the way they had mixed the tar and asphalt in order to use it as a cement for boats and buildings. Night after night and day after day had she labored, only a little at a

time for fear she might be discovered, until now the finished boat lay before her ready to receive the baby boy but three months old. Jochebed was obeying the will of Pharaoh in giving her child to the river. And had not her God in whom she trusted said that those who laid snares for others would themselves fall into the pits they had digged?

Yes, she was not afraid. God was watching, and that act which Pharaoh meant for evil would by God's help result in good.

* * * *

The gray mist of morning was creeping up from the marshes and a few rosy streaks here and there showed that the sun was bringing in another day when Jochebed and Miriam came from their hut and walked swiftly toward the river. They soon reached the spot Miriam had found, and the mother carefully laid the boat among the strongest reeds. Then as she unwrapped the shawl, they both looked down at the tiny baby, so sweet as he slept restfully, unconscious of all about him. Miriam lifted one of the tiny hands and gently kissed it, while the mother, after pressing the baby to her,

stroked his cheeks and silently laid him in the boat among the bulrushes. Placing the cover over him, she turned away and her lips moved in prayer. We may all know what that prayer was, for the New Testament has told us that it was by faith that Moses was hidden, for his parents, Amram and Jochebed, "were not afraid of the king's commandment."

Miriam, his little sister, was left to watch, and as the mist lifted and the sun shone clearly upon the dancing ripples of the river, her dark eyes searched every part of the shore and her ears were open to the slightest sound. Yes, she heard laughter, some talking, and then coming slowly toward her were Pharaoh's daughter and her maids. It was the hour for the morning bath. How carefree they were as they stepped into the waters gold-tinted by the sun. A little slave girl was watching. Would they see the boat? she asked herself, and if they did, what would be the result—mercy or sacrifice?

But what about our baby in the skiff? There was a gentle heaving of the water and a swish that made a fine lullaby, but even the best of lullabies grows tedious when baby has slept

enough and knows he is hungry. Moses wakened. Instead of a smiling face above him as his eyes opened, there was nothing but darkness. What did it all mean? Never before had anything like this happened to him; not once had he been left to cry. He struck out his tiny fists. Nothing warm met them; only a hard, cold thing hurt the small arms as they stretched forward. The tiny feet drew themselves up and then kicked briskly at the foot of his water cradle. The indignant baby—if you children know anything about babies you know that one but three months old can be very indignant and let other people know it, besides—now felt that it was time he was being noticed, so feet and hands pounded with all their puny might against the sides of his boat.

How the cradle did sway and rock! Even the princess was noticing those ripples which came from that clump of tall rushes. Crack! Snap! The reeds had broken, and out into the river swept the boat and the baby. Something more than reeds snapped, O Egypt! While the sound you heard may have seemed to you but the crackling of a rush, yet with it

by God's hand were broken the bonds which held Israel captive. It was more than a helpless babe which the current of the Nile bore down to the watching princess. It was Moses, the deliverer of his people. As the small boat lodged in a mass of tangled rushes, the princess bade one of her maids reach out and draw it to shore. With eagerness she opened the box—it was really more like a box than a boat—and her heart warmed with love as two wet baby eyes looked trustingly into hers.

"This is one of the Hebrew children," she said, and over her face passed a look which Miriam, running toward her, saw and interpreted aright, for the little sister asked, "Shall I go and call a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?"

"Go," replied the princess, and Miriam's feet flew homeward. Jochebed, with Shiphrah and Puah, was waiting, but none was surprised as Miriam's flying figure came toward them with arms outstretched, calling out as she ran, "It is well, mother, all is well!"

Jochebed and her husband had trusted in God; they had believed His promises. Jochebed

outwardly had obeyed the king, and God had given back into her arms the child she had trusted to Him.

Again by the riverside she received her child from the princess. His own mother was to be his nurse, while Pharaoh's daughter was later to claim him as her son. "I shall call him Moses," said the princess, "because I drew him out of the water."

THE DOOR NO ONE CAN OPEN

THE TURNING BACK OF ISRAEL FROM THE PROMISED LAND

Have you ever visited a military camp? If you have, and the soldiers had marched for months through dust and heat, often going for days with little or no water, and had just reached a place where water was plentiful and they could pitch their tents and rest, you have seen a camp something like that of Israel. The Israelites were on their way to a land where they could be free, have their own laws, and practice their own religion. After more than twenty months of marching with their children, their wives and sisters, old people and babies, cattle and household goods, they had at last come to the border of the promised land.

For hundreds of years the people of Israel had been slaves of the Egyptians; then, not being able to endure further cruelty, they had left Egypt. They were guided by their leader, Moses, who was teaching them how to be free and taking them to a beautiful country where

each one of them could have a home of his own. Just think of it! After all their years of suffering, to have such pleasure waiting for them as soon as their journey was ended! And now their journey was over, the weary march ended, and the new country close at hand.

But they were not happy. Did you ever see people in our own country who were getting just what they wanted—in fact, getting just what they were going after—and yet were unhappy and faultfinding? Each day since they had left Egypt these Israelites had found something to complain about. When everything was going on well, they were glad they had started. But the minute anything went wrong and they had to wait a little for food or water, or were disturbed in any way, they found fault with Moses and blamed themselves for being so foolish as to have listened to him and left Egypt.

You can't understand such actions? Why not? Have you never seen girls and boys, and some grown people, too, just like these Israelites? I knew a girl who was all smiles until she learned that she had to ride backward during

a delightful automobile trip, and then there was something wrong every mile of the way. Another girl I knew sang happily at the piano until she discovered her sister had loaned her favorite song; then the piano closed with a spiteful bang and the singing voice became a scolding one.

All these twenty months not a word of thanks had these people spoken to Moses for his care of them. I suppose they felt as many people feel today, that as soon as there was nothing more to complain about they would give thanks. Of course there were some among these many marchers who, all the way through the desert, had helped Moses by thinking and talking of the beautiful country they were going to, instead of the trouble they had in getting there. They were like travelers paying a visit to our wonderful mountains; some look at the time cards and circulars and picture the beauty they soon will see, while others find nothing but dust and heat, and noisy, crowded cars.

It was a lively scene on the evening when they camped for the last time before entering the land which was to be theirs. The patient

camels slowly chewed their cuds as they sleepily blinked at the moon just rising over the mountains. The thirsty cattle were eagerly drinking water and sighing with content as they lay down to rest.

Little Benjamin pulled at his mother's skirts, asking if they were going to walk any more that day. Dear little boy, he had been a baby wrapped in his mother's shawl the night his parents had hurried out of Egypt, and now he was a jolly little fellow trotting by her side. And his sister Sarah's hair, that had been short bobbing curls, now nearly reached her waist. Camp fires were being built, tents set up, and the heavy burdens laid aside in preparation for the long night's rest.

What was behind those dark mountains and across the silent sea? Was it a land big enough for them all? Did it have plenty of wood and water, and could they grow large crops of grain and fruit? They kept asking one another these questions until Moses told them that in the morning twelve men, each one a ruler of one of the twelve tribes of Israel, should go and spy out the land for them.

Moses advised the scouts to be very particular to look at everything, and be able when they returned to tell the waiting people just what kind of a land it was. He did not want his people to be disappointed, but he wished them to know what to expect when they entered the land, and what they must do to enter it. He told the twelve scouts that they must be very brave, for without courage their trip would be useless.

Tell us, he said, all about the people that are now in the country. Are they strong or weak, and are there a great many of them? Do they live in villages or cities, and are their cities fenced? He also asked them to bring back some of the fruit which grew in this wonderful country God had promised to give them. Moses told the Israelites the land had been given to them. All they had to do was to take it.

"That's easy enough," you boys and girls say. "Almost any people would take what was given to them, especially something good." Would they? Wait and see.

Early in the morning the camp was astir, and the scouts were as eager to start as the people

were to have them. The people were tired of marching day after day over hot sands or jagged rocks which burned or cut their feet. Nor did they want to be hungry or thirsty any more, for the desert over which they had come did not give them much to eat or to drink. And the children, whose little legs must have been swollen from much walking or from being doubled under them as they journeyed along on a camel's or donkey's back, soon could caper about and be happy at play in their own land. Those hot, weary days followed by nights often as stifling, were now past, and home and its comforts lay just ahead of them.

I am sure the Israelites were very happy as they spent the forty days the scouts were exploring the new country in telling one another what kind of homes they were going to have, the cattle they would raise, and the grains they would grow. Some must have thought they would rather live on the seacoast. It would be cooler, and, besides, they could send ships to other countries. Others preferred the silent mountains, or green hills where fine olives or delicious grapes could be grown. And some, like our

western farmers, wanted the plains where wheat would grow and the sheep and cattle could find rich pasture. It was a small country, very small; but in one thing it was like ours—it had rivers, lakes, mountains, seacoast, plains. Some parts of this country were cold and others hot; some of it was barren and some had very rich soil. In fact, one who could not find something to his taste in it was hard to please.

At the end of the fortieth day some little lads ran in great excitement into the camp with the news that the scouts were in sight. They said two of them were carrying between them something large hung on a pole. The people hurried from their tents and cheered as the scouts entered the camp. Joshua and Caleb, two of the scouts, looked happy as they proudly showed Moses and the people the great bunch of grapes they were carrying between them. They had gathered this bunch at Eschol, they said, for it was the beginning of the grape season, and these were the first ripe grapes.

The people were so glad to hear all the good news that Caleb and Joshua had to tell that they had not noticed the sad face of Moses as

he watched the other ten scouts, who lingered behind, their faces dark and scowling. Finally the ten spoke and said that Caleb and Joshua had told the truth. The land was very rich and beautiful, with everything in it that they wanted, but there was no use talking longer about taking it. They might just as well turn back into the desert, for they would never be able to enter the country.

What a difference between the two reports — Caleb and Joshua urging Moses to enter with the Israelites because the people of Canaan (the name of the country lying behind the silent mountains) could easily be conquered, while the other scouts were telling Moses that it was impossible. Perhaps you think these ten men were not as wise as Caleb and Joshua, or perhaps that they were not warriors, while Caleb and Joshua were. But remember that the Bible expressly states that each one of them was head of a tribe in Israel. That meant that each man was a warrior, had fought battles, and won the right to be head. In those days people had to fight to win anything, and afterward they had to fight to keep it. No, all the men sent out

had been well chosen, and that was the shame of it. For of twelve heads of Israel ten returned badly frightened, and their fright kept growing as they told again and again the dangers in the way. Their fears made them lose their good sense, their strength, and finally their truthfulness.

"The cities are fenced," they said. Fenced cities, you know, mean walled cities. Sometimes there were thick double walls around them, and oftentimes on these walls there were watch towers that were large enough for people to live in.

The Israelites began to murmur. The fear of the scouts roused their fears, and soon they were thinking with the scouts that they had made their journey for nothing, that they might better have stayed in Egypt or have died in the wilderness.

Finally Caleb quieted the people, saying, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it."

But the other scouts answered, "We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we."

CALEB AND JOSHUA RETURNING FROM SPYING OUT THE LAND

Then in their fright they began to slander the land which they had but a few moments ago so highly praised, and their stories of danger grew worse.

The only difference between our two brave scouts and the ten cowards was that two of them kept thinking of and looking for all the good things, while the ten, giving all their attention to the dangers in the way, at last believed there was nothing else. Moses had seen both sides, for had he not said when they started to explore Canaan, "And be ye of good courage." He knew that faith and courage could win, but that the people would be helpless if their leaders were afraid.

Then again spoke the ten scouts, saying, "We were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so were we in their sight."

Of course they were. Anyone who loses his self-respect as these men had done, has lost the respect of others. Everything that was good was small in their eyes, even themselves. They thought their people and their God were small and weak and naturally their enemies agreed with them.

The people were now in a foolish panic. The orderly camp was in an uproar with people running aimlessly about asking one another if they had not better turn and go back to Egypt.

"Let us make a captain," they said, "and let us return into Egypt."

As Moses heard these words do you wonder that, heartsick and discouraged, he and Aaron the priest "fell on their faces before . . . the congregation of the children of Israel?"

"But," you say, "we thought God had *given* them the land, and all they had to do was to take it."

Certainly, but can you take anything without making an effort? Suppose your father wants to give you a college education. Can he give it to you unless you study? Or perhaps you wish to *take* music lessons. Can anyone *give* them to you if you will not practice? If food were put into your mouth you would have to chew it. No, our people of Israel had never been promised that they could slip easily into a land waiting for them. They knew better. They had fought their way through the

wilderness; they must fight their way into the promised land.

Caleb and Joshua rent their clothes as Moses fell upon his face—in that country these two acts meant they were in great distress—and spoke to the people, saying, "The land, which we passed through to spy out, is an exceedingly good land. If Jehovah delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it unto us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not against Jehovah, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is removed from over them, and Jehovah is with us: fear them not."

Caleb and Joshua saw the weakness of the people of Canaan; and to them, with their faith in God and their courageous spirit, it was their enemies and not themselves that looked like "grasshoppers." But it is always useless to argue with those who fear. The frightened people would not listen and commenced to stone the two brave scouts.

Moses was hurt and for the moment discouraged. Was there any use in trying to do anything further for these people? They were

thankless and unbelieving. No matter what God did for them or what wonders he showed them, every time they were in trouble they doubted His power and His promise to help them. You may think they were very stupid and say there is no one like them today. But look at them more closely. Isn't it like seeing your own self in the mirror as they pass before you with their doubts and fears? Don't we all feel happy when everything goes well? How many of us can say that we have the same faith in God when everything goes wrong?

Moses kept thinking. Had he better not leave these people? He and his family and his friends were strong enough; they would inherit the blessings God had promised. Let the people go back into the desert without him and die there. Of course they would sicken and die without his guidance. But if they were too much afraid to try to get into the promised land with him, they were too weak safely to cross the desert alone. He went over in his mind the many times Jehovah had helped him deliver these people from danger. How often, as he lay on the ground at night and looked up

at the stars, he had heard God's voice in his heart urging him to "go forward" and save his people! At last he felt less angry and less bitter toward them, and instead of wishing to leave them to their own destruction he said, as he listened for God's voice, "Pardon, I pray thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy loving-kindness, and according as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."

Moses knew that fear and unbelief could never meet and master any danger that lay between his people and the land before them. Besides, they did not all think alike. Some wished to return to Egypt, others believed it best to do nothing at all, and a few insisted on marching at once into Canaan. He was leading them and he could not go in half a dozen directions at once. To do so was impossible. Only a few had any courage or faith in their ability to conquer the enemy. There was no use in going back to Egypt. After all that had happened there, the Egyptians would no more allow them to return than the people of Canaan would permit them to enter their land. Only

one thing was possible—to turn back into the wilderness from which they had come, to go back to its burning heat, its choking dust, its hunger and pain and thirst until, weary with wandering about in it, the Israelites should have faith enough in the promises of God to march with the strength of courage and a united purpose into the land which He had given them.

Moses knew then what we all know now, that the door which will not open is unbelief. Believing a thing possible, one tries to do it; having no faith that it can be done, one never makes the effort. So God said to Moses concerning the people, "Tomorrow turn ye, and get you into the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea."

But that, you may think, was for people not a bit like us and who lived so long ago that nothing about them interests us. But you are mistaken. People are the same wherever you find them; and I have discovered in my travels that girls and boys in other lands are just the same as girls and boys in my own country.

Let us do a little thinking. America was an old continent, much older than Europe, when it was discovered. But it lay unknown on this side of the sea until Columbus believed that by sailing west he could reach India. In this faith, backed with courage, he set sail on the stormy ocean determined to find it. He sailed into his promised land even though it was not the India he sought. His faith gave the world a new country. Hannibal could have flown over the Alps as easily as it is done today instead of taking months to cross them on foot, but he did not believe he could, so he walked. The Wright brothers believed man could fly, and believing it, they made a machine that flew.

I knew a little fellow whose promised land was swimming. Was anything more delightful, he thought, than plunging and rolling about in the ocean? But he didn't believe he could learn to swim because he was afraid of the big waves, and sharks might be near, or rocks hidden under the water might hurt him. So he stood on the beach and envied the other children. He was somewhat like Israel peering

over the mountains at the land they believed they could not conquer, was he not?

Two young men applied for a position. The head of the firm said to both of them, "I can see you only at four o'clock in the morning."

One boy replied, "But you live outside the city, and there is no train after midnight until six in the morning."

The other quietly answered, "I'll be there, sir, at four o'clock in the morning."

He took the midnight train, waited in the station the remainder of the night, and called the old man out of bed at four in the morning. Yes, he got the position and in after years became the manager of the firm. There was no promised land too hard for him to enter. The other young fellow did not even think of waiting in the station. The first thought which entered his head was, "It is impossible." Perhaps for the rest of his life he kept waiting for something that he believed it was possible to do.

We must go back to our poor frightened people sadly packing their goods, folding their tents, and putting their babies who were too

little to march, on the backs of the camels or donkeys. Little Benjamin again asked his mother if they were going to march any more, and why they went back where they had just come from. His sister Sarah took him by the hand, and together the two little ones followed their mother and father out into the barren land where even the little children feel tired most of the time. Poor little lad and little lass! They did not know that the next time they stood on the border of the promised land they would be old and gray-haired, with children of their own, while their mother and father would have perished in the wilderness.

Forty days the scouts had been looking at the land of Canaan, and forty years, a year for each day, were they to wander in the wilderness. Of all the grown people, only Caleb and Joshua who had brought back a good report of the land, and who had believed that God was with them and would give it to them if they trusted in Him, were allowed to enter the promised land.

What unreasonable things fear and unbelief make people do! These people had refused to go forward, but as soon as Moses told them he

would not insist on their entering Canaan, but would go back with them to the desert, at once they decided that they would go into the land and fight the inhabitants. Was Moses pleased? No, he knew it was not faith that they could conquer their enemies, but fear of the desert which influenced them, so he said, "Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of Jehovah, seeing it shall not prosper? Go not up, for Jehovah is not among you; that ye be not smitten down before your enemies . . . . ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned back from following Jehovah, therefore Jehovah will not be with you."

By this time you boys and girls know, without my telling you, that the people paid no attention to Moses, but went out in their weakness to fight the enemy and of course were defeated. To the end of the story they refused to believe what their leader told them and as usual met the consequences of their disobedience. Some people are fond of calling these consequences punishment. Had these people been able to understand, Moses could have told them what was told many years afterward to a

little maid in Nazareth: "Blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a fulfilment of the things which have been spoken to her from the Lord."

OPENED EYES

BALAAM CURSING ISRAEL

To-day go up with me into a high mountain. From its peak there is a view, a most wonderful view, that I want you all to see. No, you will not need a field glass. The air is clear and your eyes keen, so that you will miss none of its beauty. Glasses are not worth much, anyway. Some people see little with the best of glasses, and others with dim eyes and no other help see wonders in this world of ours. From the top of this mountain can be seen rushing mountain torrents, and narrow valleys with swift rivers and those that creep along lazily toward the sea. Desolate salt marshes and fertile fields, bleakness and barrenness, beauty and plenty, dark mountains and sunny meadows, every kind of scenery, in fact, is here disclosed to our view. Whichever picture you prefer is yours to see if you will turn your face in the right direction.

It is well that we are here in the morning, for we can look west toward the river Jordan. There at our feet in the valley, nestling in the

shade of the acacia woods, is a camp. It is that of Israel, ready now to enter the land that God had promised to give them. For nearly thirty-eight years have the Hebrews wandered back and forth in the wilderness, until now, no longer a band of faint-hearted exiles but a conquering host, they rest before crossing the Jordan, which separates them from the land which is to be their home. Some of you are straining your eyes to see, there in the west, what it is that looks like a hazy blue ribbon binding the country to the river and the mountains. It is the sea, the Great Sea—the Mediterranean we call it now. We shall draw a deep breath of enjoyment as we gaze at the scene and then hurry down the steep path to the valley, for it is today that Balaam is coming to curse Israel.

"Why coming to curse Israel?" you ask in surprise.

Balak, the king of Moab, and his people are terrified because of the coming of the Hebrews. Israel has just conquered and captured two tribes and their kings, with their cities and all their possessions.

What right have these people to camp in the fields of Moab? Balak inquired of himself. True, Israel had asked permission to pass peaceably through his land and that of the other two kings, but had been refused. Israel was not now to be hindered. At last she had learned that the land God had given her had to be won, and she waged a conquering war upon every obstacle that stood between her and the land of promise.

Balak and the elders of Midian had consulted together and decided that their only safety lay in having Balaam, the wise man and sorcerer, curse these invaders. The Midianites would give him money in plenty, and honor and power, if he would only use his wisdom and counsel to defeat the Israelites. Balak had said to the elders, as he pointed to the camp resting on the borders of Midian, "Now will this multitude lick up all that is round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field."

Messengers had gone from Balak to Balaam and entreated him to return with them and curse this people. Whatever you curse will be cursed, they told him, and whatever you bless

will be blessed. It was night when the messengers reached his tent, and he was seated in its door. He rose as they alighted and asked their errand, but peremptorily shook his head as they presented Balak's request. His wisdom—and he was a very wise man—told him at once that the mission upon which they asked him to go was a hopeless one. He knew, as another wise man knew and said years afterward,

"There is no wisdom nor understanding
Nor counsel against Jehovah."

But that gold they offered him—how it did tempt him! Could not some way be found by which he could please God, Balak, and Israel? Long after his visitors lay asleep he strode back and forth outside his tent watching the stars. Yes, they were moving with their usual order across the heavens. There seemed to be no disturbance in God's universe. He knew that Jehovah was with Israel, and it was Jehovah's laws that the sons of Jacob were taught to obey. No, the task was too great for him; he would not attempt it. And he told the men so the next morning when he sent them back to Balak with his bribe of gold.

The next evening other messengers from the king were clamoring at his tent door, offering more money and higher honors. Balaam hesitated. Would they remain with him over night? he asked. He must seek the counsel of Jehovah, he told them. All night he tossed and turned upon his bed of hairy skins. Now and then his hands would clinch, itching to have within them the gold the men had brought. Was there not some way in which he could serve Jehovah in whom he believed and also Balak whose gold he coveted? He would try it, anyway. When morning came he told the messengers that he would go with them, adding, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of Jehovah my God, to do less or more."

Some of you are wondering how a man as wise as Balaam could consider going on such an errand. "Why, it is like trying to go backward and forward at the same time!" you are saying.

Yes, but the glitter of gold and desire for fame were too much of a temptation! So he tried to do the impossible and failed, just as, since his time, everyone who has attempted to

get good results by doing wrong things has failed. Some of you are saying that wise people do not act that way now. But think a minute. You may be a high-school girl or boy; perhaps you are at the head of your class and will win a scholarship. But, honestly now, did you never hear yourself say after you had failed, perhaps in some small matter, "I knew better than to do it that way all the time?" But you hoped, as we all hope and as Balaam hoped, that you could once at least do wrong and get perfect results. How did Balaam fail? The answer to that question is our story.

As the night shadows faded away his fears disappeared, and with the coming of the sun his courage rose strong and determined. Saddling his ass and calling two of his servants, he started out with them and Balak's messengers. The ass he rode was a spirited animal and carried him swiftly along the road.

Why do you laugh? You are probably picturing to yourselves one of those dejected-looking donkeys that never seem to be more than half awake, and you are amused to think that one of them could move quickly.

But the ass upon which Balaam sat was not a donkey. Asses were favorites with the Hebrews and were fine animals. They were not, of course, swift like the horse, which at that time and for many years after was employed only for war. Horses were forbidden to the Israelites, and never until the time of King David did the Hebrews make use of them.

Balak's messengers were in gay spirits. The wise man was with them and his curse would soon rout the invading Hebrews. Already in imagination they could see the Israelites deserting their tents and fleeing across the plain before pursuing Moabites and Midianites. Balaam, also, pictured in his mind the way he should spend all the money Balak was to give him. He would buy asses and camels, perhaps a bondman or two to do more work for him. Suddenly the ass he rode began to act queerly. She no longer obeyed his guiding hand, but, shaking her head free from the bridle, bolted from the road and plunged into a near-by field. Balaam struck her heavily with his stick and forced her back into the path. For a little distance she obediently trotted as he directed, then

reared and plunged with head erect and nostrils distended. Back, back she went until, trembling, she pressed against the vineyard wall, crushing Balaam's foot as she did so. With upraised stick the prophet beat the poor beast until she was forced to move forward.

On and on the company traveled until coming to a narrow cleft between some rocks where it was impossible to turn around, the ass lay down flat upon the ground, crouching in terror before some object which she saw but Balaam did not. Once more he beat the suffering animal, but she would not rise; then from her mouth came words, and Balaam stood listening as she spoke: "What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?"

Balaam answered in a rage that the only reason he did not kill her was because he had no sword. Once more did the ass speak, and again Balaam replied to her. Lifting his eyes as he did so he beheld the cause of the animal's actions. She had seen what his eyes had not perceived. Blinded with his desire to have his own way and gain the reward Balak had promised him, his eyes were closed. Now with opened eyes he

saw the angel of Jehovah with drawn sword standing in the path. Thrice had the angel turned the ass away from her course, but not until now, when Balaam could turn neither to the left nor to the right — when, in other words, there was no possible way of escape for the prophet — did he recognize God's messenger and heed his word.

Are you saying that these things are impossible and that animals do not talk? Because you have never heard them is no sign they cannot. Birds are taught to talk, and they are animals. Who can say that it is only animals walking on two legs that have the gift of speech, but if they are unfortunate enough to possess four it is impossible? We none of us talk because of our feet, do we? But we will not argue, and for those of you who hate to admit that anything of the kind was possible, let me tell you that it was a vision in which Balaam was taught a lesson.

You remember Jacob and his dream the night he lay friendless in the wilderness. He went to sleep a fugitive because of a selfish, grasping nature, but he arose in the morning

determined to give and serve because of what God had taught him in a dream. So in a vision was Balaam taught of God. He had started out to curse with his own words, hoping that Jehovah this time would alter his laws for this occasion. But it was not so to be; his opened eyes saw the angel of God guarding with drawn sword every way in which he tried to reach his evil purpose. If you go, declared Jehovah's messenger, you must speak the word that I shall give you.

Baffled and afraid, the prophet went forward with the rest of the company. He dared not go back. That would mean the ridicule and scorn of the men who were with him, and all Moab would say that he was an impostor and was not able to do the deed they had asked of him. Soon the plains of Moab were reached; a few more paces and they would begin to ascend the mountain upon whose summit Balak was waiting for Balaam and his company. Standing upon the same peak from which we saw our beautiful view was Moab's king pointing out to Balaam the tents of Israel far below in the valley. Grasping Balaam tightly by the arm,

Balak said, "This host will overpower us if you do not curse them for us."

Balaam, answering, told him that he had no power except what Jehovah gave him and no words save those put into his mouth by Jehovah. Balak had been warned. He should not have insisted that Balaam try his evil spells upon this people who were now peacefully resting in Moab's borders. Balak's gods were changeable; they never could be depended upon. What was wrong for them one day would probably be right on the next day. So Balak, judging Jehovah by his own gods, told Balaam to go on; it might be that today Jehovah would curse. Poor, ignorant king, he and his people had never heard the voice of Jehovah declaring, "For I, Jehovah, change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed."

Balaam walked slowly forward. Before him stretched the panorama of beauty that you and I have just witnessed. The tents of Israel shone in the morning sun, and the turbulent river, dancing across the plain and hurrying along the valley, sparkled as its ripples now and then caught a stray sunbeam. Every tribe was

there, each carrying the symbol by which it could be recognized. What perfect order, thought Balaam, as he viewed the twelve sections, each by itself and yet united as one nation. Truly these were Jehovah's people. As he opened his mouth to speak, no sound issued from his lips. What had closed them and made his curse die upon them before it was spoken?

His eyes had again been opened to see a shimmering glow of light in the center of the camp. It looked like a cloud, but shot through as it was with dazzling brilliancy, he knew that it was more than a cloud. It was the light that brooded always during the daytime over the ark of the covenant. Israel followed this light which always went before them. It meant the presence of Jehovah, their God. Could Balaam curse when Jehovah and his blessing were present? So upon the listening ears of the astonished Balak there fell words of wondrous blessing for Israel. When the speech ended, he angrily accused Balaam of wishing the enemy good instead of harm. "But, come now," he added, "you must view the camp from another spot and from there you may be able to

curse." This time he led the prophet to a place from which could be seen only a part of the Hebrew host. He must have thought that the sight of the great orderly host of Israel had made Balaam afraid, and discouraged him in the beginning. But the second attempt was no better than the first, and the silent Hebrews again received the blessing of their God from the mouth of Balaam.

Balak, now thoroughly alarmed, urged that Balaam stop and neither curse nor bless these people. But when a man is moved by the Spirit of God, he cannot stop when he pleases, but must go on and finish his work. And this is what Balaam told the king: "All that Jehovah speaketh, that I must do."

One more trial was Balak willing to give Balaam, so he said to him, "Come now, I will take thee unto another place; peradventure it will please God that thou mayest curse me them from thence."

But the other place was no better. God seemed to be the same no matter where Balaam stood, and a greater and more wonderful blessing upon Israel came from the lips of Balaam.

The king of Moab was now thoroughly enraged. He was so angry that for the moment he forgot his fear and bade Balaam flee to his own people. The prophet, standing before him, then uttered the words which form one of the greatest speeches ever made, so true are they. It was not of the petty tyrant Baal he was speaking, the god whose whims would change with each new day and whose favor could be bought and sold by his worshipers. No, it was of Jehovah he spoke when he said, "He hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it."

Think of it, boys and girls. Not a blessing that really is a blessing can be altered or changed. How hard this Moabitish king and his followers had tried to obstruct God's way, and all they had realized was disappointment and time wasted! Balak's anger at Balaam resulted in drawing down a curse upon himself, for the prophet turned and told of the overthrow of Moab by Israel. Every net that we set for the feet of another only entangles our own. There are some people who do not or will not see this. But Balaam's eyes were opened to acknowledge it.

As night fell he went down the mountain side alone, first pausing to look once more at the camp below him. The cloud over the tabernacle had disappeared and in its place was a pillar of fire. Did his ears catch the refrain of words to be spoken in the years that came after him—words saying, "Our God is a consuming fire," destroying every false thing that dared deny the good with which He blesses his children?

As he journeyed homeward and the stars came out one by one, he stroked kindly the neck of the ass he rode, trusting to her unerring instinct to carry him safely through the darkness to the door of his tent. As he reached his home and stood before his tent door he uncovered his head. Jehovah had spoken through the instinct of the brute, the light of the stars, and in his own heart. Together they had blended in one musical tone, repeating the refrain, "God's will is blessing."

THE SCARLET CORD

RAHAB AND THE SPIES

A number of frightened people were running back and forth upon the city walls. From the strong towers upon those walls warriors were anxiously watching a cloud of dust darkening the horizon. It had been there yesterday, but today it was rolling nearer and nearer to Jericho. Not a dweller in the city dared venture outside the gates, which were closed and heavily barred. Only those who were fortunate enough to have a house upon the wall could know what was going on outside and see how rapidly that fatal cloud was approaching them. I can hear some of you children ask why a cloud of dust should frighten the people of a rich and strong city like Jericho, filled as it was with fighting men of valor. It was because behind that dust was an enemy that everyone feared, an invading army coming to conquer and to destroy.

The white-faced people inside the gates with trembling hands were trying to hide their valuables—their gold and silver, their jewels, and costly garments. Some looked sadly upon

their homes. Would they be homeless tomorrow, they were wondering, and would all they loved be ashes by another day? Mothers held their children closer to them. By to-morrow they might not have them, or, what would be still worse, the little ones might be motherless and fatherless and left to the mercy of strangers. Fathers with swords in their hands gathered together. Every weapon of war had been seized by them to repel the dreaded foe.

"It is the army of Israel!" cried the watchers in the towers. "No people has been able to withstand it." Despair was in their hearts, and their spirit was sick with fear—a very poor condition for a people to be in when it is necessary to meet and conquer a foe.

"But why should they be afraid of Israel?" you boys and girls are asking. "Didn't ten of the spies return to Moses badly frightened and declare that the Israelites were as grasshoppers in the sight of their enemies?"

Yes, but since the time of that story forty years have passed and Moses no longer leads the people. Israel is advancing now under its leader Joshua. All these years the Hebrews

have been in the wilderness. They had abused the love of their great leader, Moses, had found fault with him always, and only a few had been gracious enough to appreciate what he had done for them. Moses had spared them under every trial. All they had to do was to murmur because there was no water and his rod made it gush out of the rock; or if it was meat they craved, their complaints brought forth from him a prayer that Jehovah would grant them their desire and in reply quail rained upon them.

Under Joshua's leadership it was different. He was brave and true like Moses, but every man with him had to earn what he wanted. Joshua had said to them, "Be strong and of good courage." It was his watchword, given him by Jehovah after the death of Moses. All these years the Israelites had fought their way through the wilderness. Little by little they had overcome enemies, and their courage had grown with every victory, until now as they were approaching Jericho there was not one among them, child, woman, or warrior, who was not certain that Jehovah their God was with them and would give the city into their hand.

You remember that little Benjamin and his sister Sarah had sadly followed their parents back into the wilderness from which they had just come. They had turned again to those burning plains and dry sands because the Hebrew people had not the courage to enter the land God had promised them. But now, in the time of this story, it was not a host of weak slaves but a conquering people armed with faith in their God and confidence in their leader, which was marching upon Jericho. Forty troubled years in the wilderness had made their enemies, and not themselves, seem like grasshoppers.

All day the watchers upon the walls and the people in the city were waiting for Israel. At last gleaming swords and flashing shields told the watchers in the towers that the enemy they feared was near. But not a sound was to be heard. No shout of victory, no demand that Jericho should surrender, came from the Hebrew camp, silent before the doomed city. Not an arrow was shot over the walls, no missile of stone fell in its midst, no battering-ram stormed against its gates. There was only a sickening

silence, so great that it filled the hearts of the people with a fear worse than the noise of battle could have caused.

The sun set in blazing colors and tinted with lurid hues the tents of Israel, encamped for the night on the plains of Jericho. Camels were watered and cattle fed, while little children fell asleep in their mothers' arms after eating their supper of manna—that manna which for forty years had been Israel's bread in the wilderness. How they hated that manna! Perhaps had they known that the evening on which they camped before Jericho the manna would fall for the last time, they would have eaten it with greater relish. Do you ask me why the manna ceased to fall? It was no longer needed. Israel had entered the promised land.

Soon darkness fell upon both the frightened city and the silent Jewish camp, until the moon, slowly rising, touched with silvery tints the tents of Israel and threw a white shroud over the battlements of Jericho. Years before, the Hebrews had watched this same moon rise, and as its full radiance shone upon them had hurried out of Egypt. Then the silvery rays of the

moon disclosed red stains like blood upon every Hebrew doorpost. Thereby were the Hebrews separated from the Egyptians when the angel of death visited Egypt. It was in memory of this deliverance that as they halted before Jericho they silently ate the passover. But the first-born of man and beast of the Egyptians died on the night when the angel of death passed over the land.

As years ago the moonlight had touched the scarlet stains upon the doorposts of the Israelites, so to-night the wind, moaning about the battlements of the city, as it shrieked past a window in a tower upon the wall tossed into the moonlight the fluttering strands of a gleaming scarlet cord bound firmly to the casement. In the tower is Rahab, the innkeeper. Gathered about her are her family and all her kindred. No fear is in their faces, for the Jewish camp outside brings to them, not danger, but deliverance. And why, you ask, should this woman and her household be spared? Are they not Canaanites of Jericho? They are, but when you read Rahab's story and know why that crimson cord flutters in her window, you will agree with me

that Rahab deserved her life—that she had won her freedom fully as much as Israel won the victory over Jericho.

* * * * *

Before the night of our story—a number of days earlier, in fact—Israel's camp was in Shittim, where she was resting in the beauty of that garden spot. There she was enjoying shade from the sun, plenty of water for her cattle, and safety from wandering desert tribes. But her leader, Joshua, did not like resting. He wanted to move on before his people formed such a habit of resting that they would object to traveling any further. They were bound for the promised land and he was determined that they should reach it. The camp was close by the waters of the river Jordan, and as the people slept Joshua stole alone from his tent to the river's bank. Standing there he lifted his arms toward heaven in thanksgiving. Only to cross this Jordan and the years of Israel's wanderings would be over, for the land God had promised his people lay just across the river.

I shall not be surprised if some of you girls and boys say you think these people Joshua is

leading will not go over as soon as he wishes them to. You may add that, as they have always found something to be afraid of, they probably will now. But Joshua had for many months listened to a voice speaking in his heart, saying: "Be strong and of good courage; be not affrighted, neither be thou dismayed; for Jehovah thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." His faith and courage had inspired his followers. Perhaps you know that both faith and courage are contagious, and so is fear. Don't you remember how the ten frightened spies sent out by Moses threw all Israel into a panic with their terrifying tales? The next time you are tempted to be afraid, remember those spies and the harm they did.

Joshua was not going to permit further delay. The people must at once begin to make themselves ready for the journey across the Jordan. To hesitate might mean defeat, so he said to the officers of Israel, "Pass through the midst of the camp, and command the people, saying, 'Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye are to pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which Jehovah your God

giveth you to possess it.'" The day before, he had sent two spies, young men, princes of the house of Israel, across the plain to Jericho and told them to bring him a report of the country and its people.

"Only two spies!" all of you exclaim. "Why did he send so few when Moses had to send twelve?"

The first spies had gone forty years before. They all had been slaves in Egypt and knew nothing but the lash of their Egyptian task-masters and the fears of their own hearts. These two young men of Joshua's time had been born in the wilderness. Constant battling with foes arrayed against them had made them strong. The people were now all of one mind. They had one determined purpose, and that was to enter Canaan. And as you all know, when people, one or many, fully determine to do anything, there is nothing that will stop them. It was a very different Israel at rest by the shores of Jordan than the feeble, divided host that had camped by the mountain in Moses' time.

Let us leave Joshua and the Hebrews making themselves ready for their march and follow

our two spies as they journey across the plain to Jericho. They must move quickly, as the city gates will be closed and barred at sundown. Soon they are in sight of Jericho's walls, and one spy asks his companion to look at a tall tower upon the wall. He thinks people are living in it. They may keep lodgers, he says to his friend, and if so, it is safer to stay there than venture farther into the city. Besides, it is close to the gate.

Perhaps you are wondering what were the names of these spies. We all feel so much better acquainted with people if we know their names. The Bible does not give their names, but it does say that Salmon of Israel married Rahab. So people have loved to think that one of these spies was Salmon.

"I think I should like to call the other one Benjamin," chimes in a little girl.

Very well, it can do no harm. And if calling them Salmon and Benjamin will make them seem nearer to us, it is best to do so.

Travelers were passing back and forth through the city gates. Jericho was a market for many foreign countries. Camels laden with

dyes, linens, and rich garments were lying down as merchants and people bargained with each other about prices. The city was wealthy, her silver and gold plentiful; fat cattle and many sheep grazed upon her plains. She was a trader with cities and peoples near and far, and through her streets there daily passed foreigners from the far eastern countries. Many languages must have been spoken and strange faces seen, so it is not surprising that in the crowd our two spies slipped unnoticed through the gates and made their way to Rahab's house upon the walls.

Perhaps you boys and girls are saying that if you had been the spies you would not have stopped at Rahab's inn. You would have gone on to the king's palace and heard what the rulers of the country were talking about. But it is not in kings' palaces that we hear much gossip. There the talking is only for a favored few and often behind closed doors. To stop at the public house was the wiser plan. Where many travelers met, the townspeople would gather to exchange news with them. Of one thing everybody was talking—the victorious

march of Israel toward Canaan. A feeble people whom they had all despised were now stronger than themselves, and their kings were conquerors. How they did it no one was able to tell, but a stranger who had once lived in Israel said it was because they had a God different from the gods of the other nations. Jehovah was His name.

"We have gods also," the people of the city replied. "Look at our Molech, who loves to destroy little children with fire; and Chemosh and Baal, are they not powerful?"

"But those Israelites say your gods are no gods," replied the stranger; "that Jehovah is the lord of the whole earth, and that His law no one can change."

"How absurd!" laughed the citizens of Jericho. "We all know that Molech is pleased when we burn our children upon his altar, and that we can make him change his laws by this practice. A god that does not change—that is nonsense!"

Rahab had listened for months to these jeers at Jehovah, but it had only strengthened her faith in Him. She may have had a friend

who had been forced by the priests of Molech to lay her baby in the molten arms of his hideous image, and as the little one's feeble screams had been stilled by the devouring flames it may have been Rahab's hands that had led the poor mother back to the childless home. A God who had some mercy, whose law did not change, was a God so much better than the cruel fire-gods of her people that Rahab wanted to know more about Him and about His people Israel.

As the tales about Israel went around that night, there were some in Rahab's house who looked suspiciously at the spies. Soon they left the others and, speeding to the king's palace, said, "Behold, there came men in hither to-night of the children of Israel to search out the land."

Back went word from the king to Rahab demanding that she give up the men that were in her house. "Bring forth the men that are come to thee, that are entered into thy house; for they are come to search out all the land," were his words.

"Oh, I hope she did n't give them up!" cries a little girl.

No, she told the messengers who came for them that they were not there. They had gone out of the gates just before they had been closed for the night.

"But that was n't the truth," adds a boy. "She had hidden the spies on her roof under stalks of flax."

"We learn in Sunday school that it is never right to tell a lie," you are all thinking.

It never is. But in the time of our story people were afraid to tell the truth. They knew no better than to deceive. Fear of their gods and of one another made them tell what was not true. Look around you to-day and see for yourself. Is it the people who are afraid or those who have courage who are the most truthful? Rahab's day was the age of fear. She was afraid of her gods, of her people, and of the conquering Hebrew host.

The king's messengers left Rahab's house and, unlocking the city gates, sped out into the plain. Clear to the fords of the Jordan did they go, but they found no men.

"Did they shut the gates after them?" inquires a child.

"Yes," answers a boy. "Those ancient cities never left a gate in their walls open or unlocked after dark."

Rahab's work was not over. The spies were in her house, and the gate of the city closed. What should she do with them? How could she save them?

As she wished to save the spies, she soon thought of a way to do it. On her roof lay coils of scarlet rope. The window on the tower overlooked the plain; she would let them down out of the window with the rope.

You may be asking why a woman of Jericho wished to save the enemies of her city. I think it must have been because she was sick at heart over the horrible and cruel practices of her people when they worshiped their gods. She had heard of Jehovah. She knew that the people who acknowledged Him as their God did many wicked and cruel things, but that was the fault of the people and not of Jehovah. A God who loved and blessed His people instead of tormenting them as did the gods of the Canaanites, she wanted to know more about, and here were the two spies who could tell her. You remember

the Bible says of Rahab,[1] "By faith Rahab the innkeeper perished not with the unbelievers, for she had received the spies with peace."

She ran quickly up to the roof after she had sent the pursuers away. Calling to the men, she told them of her plan, saying, "I know that Jehovah hath given you the land, and that the fear of you is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. For we have heard how Jehovah dried up the water of the Red Sea before you, when ye came out of Egypt; . . . . for Jehovah your God, He is God in heaven above, and on earth beneath."

Rahab was wise as well as kind, for before she allowed them to escape she made them give her their oath that they would save alive all her kindred. Not one of them was to perish when the walls of Jericho fell. The men agreed and pledged their word to her, saying, "Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business; and it shall be, when Jehovah giveth us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee. . . . . Behold, when we come into the land,

[1] Ferrar Fenton

thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by." This she was to do so that the spies could recognize her house. But to be spared, her kindred and she herself must be in her house; anyone remaining outside must perish with the city.

This is the reason why on the night on which our story opens there waved a scarlet cord from a window in a tower upon the wall. Let us go back to the place and time in which our story began. We left the silent Jewish host encamped before Jericho as they ate the passover, and we were looking with sad eyes at a great city doomed to destruction. In our day neither you nor I can understand why one nation should want to destroy another. But when Rahab lived, it was a time for hating. People then had not been taught to love. We will stand here by the tower and look across the plain. The moonlight is brilliant, so that we can see easily every movement in the camp of Israel. Three shadows creep out from the silent camp and are coming toward us. They are men. They are looking for something.

Suddenly one of them seizes the arm of the leader and points to the tower. "Ah, Rahab, you have kept your word," we can almost hear them say, and we know that they add, "As you have been true to us, so shall we keep the promise we have made to you."

"And who are these men?" you are asking.

The great leader Joshua and our two spies. Joshua had commanded Israel to destroy Jericho. But first, he told the spies, they must bring Rahab and all who were in her house to a place of safety. The walls must fall, and afterward the city and its people be destroyed by sword and fire, but upon Rahab and her kindred no harm should come.

Do you wonder what became of Rahab? She lived in Israel and Jehovah became her God. She and Salmon were the parents of Boaz, who married Ruth. This is why we like to think that Salmon was one of the spies that Rahab saved. Both Salmon and Rahab were young. Each was brave, and both of them kept their word.

It was their descendant, King David, the beloved of Israel, who said,

"Oh taste and see that Jehovah is good:
Blessed is the man that taketh refuge in him,
. . . . . .
For there is no want to them that fear him."

The scarlet cord bound in her window showed Rahab's faith in Israel's God, Jehovah.

IS IT TRUE?

RUTH AND NAOMI

A little bird once told me that all young people, big and little, love a love story; so I'm going to tell you one. If you will turn to the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament—Now what is the matter? Why do some of you girls look so disappointed and say, "The Old Testament! That is a part of the Bible, and there are no love stories in that?"

But there are, and such interesting ones that you will not want to lay the book down until you have read the very last word. In what place would it be more natural for you to find a love story than in the Bible?

If I should ask any one of you what the Bible is, you would say, "The ministers call it the Word of God," and perhaps there is among you a tiny girl just big enough to hold the book who will add quickly, "My mother says, God is love."

Then why be surprised if the Bible tells a story of love, with a hero and heroine having experiences just as exciting as in any story book,

and ending with a wedding, just as you want all of your favorite stories to end?

You have read the story of the wonderful boy David, and perhaps have asked, "Has the Bible any stories of wonderful girls?" Or you may have looked through the Book to find out for yourselves and have been answered by the story of Ruth.

She was a Moabitess. In those days that was the same as saying that she was a heathen; and then as now no one expected much of a heathen. But the world is so full of surprises that we have to look sharp and think fast to keep up with all that come to us. Ruth's people, the Moabites, believed in a god named Chemosh who was very cruel and often made his people suffer. Naomi, Ruth's mother-in-law, was a Hebrew and had been taught that the Hebrew's God, Jehovah, gave only blessings to those who obeyed his commandments. Righ there is the surprise. We find Naomi complaining and finding fault, saying that her God is sending her trouble, while Ruth's spirit is bubbling over with love and good will toward all.

Naomi and her husband, Elimelech, with their two sons, had moved from Bethlehem-judah to the plains of Moab because of a famine in Judea. In those days a famine was a more serious matter than it is now. With the telephone, the telegraph, and our great ocean vessels and steam trains, any barren part of our country where the crops have failed or the frost has killed them can easily get relief. Now a message can go round the earth in a few hours. But in the time of our story there was no way of traveling except by walking, unless one was rich enough to have camels and oxen or donkeys.

In the days of Ruth, traveling was very dangerous, and no one was sure when he started out that he would get safely to his destination. If you have read the stories of our early American settlers and of the troubles they had with the Indians, and often with wild animals, you will have a good idea of the wildness of the times of the Judges, for it was in their time that Ruth lived.

You can also understand how very hungry Naomi and her husband, Elimelech, must have been to leave their safe home in Bethlehem-judah, with their two boys, Mahlon and Chilion,

and walk, or ride by means of oxen or camels, to the plains of Moab. There were mountains, sea, and deserts between them and Moab, and we wonder how the little family ever managed to get there. But they were hungry, and bread was in Moab. They had an object in view, and like David, who always aimed straight at his object, our family looked straight ahead at the bread that was to be had in Moab instead of wasting time thinking of the dangers of the journey.

They found food and friends in Moab and liked it so well that they stayed there even after the famine was over in Judea. Their two boys grew to be men and married women of Moab. They were very happy, for theirs was a home rich in kindness and none of them thought of their having any more trouble. But it came. Elimelech and his sons, Mahlon and Chilion, died, and Naomi and her two daughters-in-law became widows. Poor Ruth and Orpah with Naomi were now alone.

"But they were not alone," some of you older girls will say, "for they must have had many friends; and Ruth and Orpah, who were

Moabites, must have had relatives who would care for them."

Yes, for you girls of to-day that is a very natural way of thinking. But do you know that in those days women had no independence and were bought and sold the same as furniture and cattle? For a girl not to belong to someone was to be without any protection, and for young women that was a very serious matter. A girl without male relatives never knew what might happen to her that she would not be able to resist, and having no "owner" to fight for her, she would be powerless.

You may say, "But Ruth and Orpah must have had parents who would care for them."

Yes, if they wished to. But when a girl married she lost by law the protection of her father and other male relatives. Her only lawful claim was on the male relatives of her dead husband.

Naomi, broken-hearted, decided to return to Bethlehem-judah. She had heard that her own country now had plenty of food. She had probably heard this often before, but paid no attention to it, just as we all let things pass by

until we think they can be of use to us, and then suddenly the uninteresting becomes interesting. A little girl whom I knew, would not study and hated to go to school, but she loved stories. There was not always someone to read them to her, and so she made up her mind that she would learn to read them herself even if she had to study. Then she studied. So it was with Naomi. As long as things went along easily and pleasantly she was satisfied. Her name, "Naomi," you know, means "pleasant." I have known girls, and I am sure you have, too, who instead of running away from disagreeable things stayed right where they were and turned the unpleasantness into pleasantness. This was Ruth's way, as you will see. Naomi, trying hard to find pleasure, going from her own country to a strange one and back again, I am very sorry to say carried with her a spirit of complaining, faultfinding, and fretfulness. At last she called herself "Marah," which means "bitterness." I think she deserved that name in the first place, don't you?

The two sons and their wives and Naomi had been very happy together, so that when

Naomi was going back to her own country her two daughters-in-law wanted to return with her. They were very busy getting ready, seeing that their sandals were in good order, filling their pockets,—the long loose bosom of their outer coat was frequently used for storing food,—fastening up their flowing skirts with a tight girdle so that they could walk more easily, selling or giving away the little property they owned, and waiting for some caravan which was going up to Bethlehem to pass their way.

To you who can step into a comfortable sleeping car and go alone thousands of miles, arriving safely at your journey's end, this waiting for people who might be going your way may seem foolish. But in the days of the Judges no one who wished to arrive anywhere safely ever traveled alone. So Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth daily looked across the plains for a caravan—that is, a band of men, camels, cattle, and slaves, walking and riding by day, sleeping on the ground or under rude tents at night, as they journeyed from town to town. They must also carry water, not only to drink, but to keep their hands clean. Keeping the hands clean

was even more necessary than it is now, for the food for all was in one common dish set in the center of a group of people. Each one put his hand into the dish and helped himself, so of course clean hands were insisted upon.

Perhaps you who have read the Book of Ruth will say, "But the Bible does not tell any of these things about their journey." Of course not, for the Bible is talking to those who are supposed to know what the customs of the people were in the time of the Judges. If I should tell you that my little neighbor is going with her father to California, it would not be necessary for me to tell you all about how they were going. You know how people travel in this day.

Before Naomi had gone very far on her journey she began to be uneasy about her daughters-in-law. Although she loved them dearly and was glad to have them with her, she feared—that is just like Naomi, isn't it, always afraid of something?—that they might not be comfortable or happy in her country, which was a strange one to them, and so she stopped and urged them to go back. She could see only sorrow ahead for herself and for them. If there was anything

good to expect, she failed to see it. Looking at the dark side of things is to thought what smoke is to the eyes—everything is clouded and seems gloomy. So it was with our poor disappointed Naomi.

She kissed both her daughters-in-law and said to them, "Go, return each of you to your mother's house: Jehovah deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. Jehovah grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband."

They cried bitterly at her words and refused to leave her, saying, "Nay, but we will return with thee unto thy people."

But Naomi was firm and continued to urge them to turn back, saying, "Turn again, my daughters, go your way . . . it grieveth me much for your sakes, for the hand of Jehovah is gone forth against me."

Orpah and Ruth were both affectionate and sincere and wanted to be with their mother-in-law. But Naomi was so filled with fear that Orpah began to feel it herself, and to wonder if, after all, it would not be wiser to remain in her own country than to venture into an unknown

land whose dangers might be even worse than those with which she was familiar. So Orpah kissed Naomi and turned back toward Moab, crying bitterly as she went.

Naomi, much surprised at Ruth's refusing to leave her, tried again to show her how much better it would be for her to return to her own people and her own god. But Ruth's love would not let her listen to Naomi's fears, and she spoke the words that have lived for thousands of years, so full are they of love and devotion: "Entreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried; Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

Naomi was silent. Her fears for the moment were quieted. She experienced then the truth of what the apostle John stated centuries later: "Perfect love casteth out fear." Which loved the more, Orpah or Ruth? Some of you young people will be in doubt; others will say they loved equally well, but that Orpah was more

cautious, which is necessary if one wishes to get on in the world. A few I can hear saying to themselves, "Love therefore is the fulfillment of the law." Love never acknowledges itself beaten but accomplishes the good it sets out to do. What was terror to Naomi and Orpah was a pathway of peace to Ruth. In the house of Naomi and her Hebrew husband, Mahlon, Ruth had been taught that God dealt kindly and justly with all who really loved Him and kept His commandments. To this poor heathen Moabitish maiden it was very simple—just obey and love instead of being driven frantic by fear. You see *she* had put into practice what *they* preached.

It was April, the beginning of the barley harvest, when Ruth and Naomi arrived in Bethlehem. Naomi had changed so much while living in Moab that her Bethlehem friends in welcoming her had to ask, "Is this Naomi?" This sad, sour-looking woman they could not believe was the happy Naomi who had left them years before. She was so busy pitying herself that she had no time to be thankful when she saw that her old friends remembered her.

RUTH AND NAOMI

Instead she complained that she had gone away full. What was the matter with her memory? Had she forgotten that it was famine, emptiness, which made her leave Bethlehem? And here she came back saying that she had gone away full and that her God had brought her back empty. But, after all, Naomi was not so very unusual. I have met people just like her in these days, who, as soon as any trouble came to them, forgot all their blessings and blamed God for their misfortunes instead of looking around to see what mistake they had made and bravely setting out to correct it.

Ruth had had a happy journey; she had been expecting and looking for good things all the way. So instead of feeling weak and weary when she arrived, she was as full of life and as strong as when she started, and immediately wanted to go to work.

She wanted to glean, for it was the time of the barley harvest. To be sure, barley was the food of only the poorest people and some of them would not touch it, thinking it fit only for cattle. But Ruth never let an opportunity slip by her. Little things, she thought, were far better than

nothing at all. She could glean, and that meant some food, which was much better than starvation. In those days the corners of the grain fields were not touched by the owner; the grain growing there was left for the poor. If the reapers dropped grain anywhere else in the field, they were not allowed to pick it up, but had to leave it for the poor to glean. Picking up the fallen grain after the reapers was called gleaning.

Ruth went cheerfully to work, feeling sure that although she was a heathen in the sight of the Hebrews (Naomi's people were Hebrews), there must be some of them who were like the God they worshiped—full of loving kindness. And she found just what she expected, for she went into the field of Boaz, a wealthy, kindly man who was a relative of Mahlon, her dead husband.

"Jehovah be with you!" he said to his workers as he came into the field, and they all replied, "Jehovah bless thee!" His reapers and gleaners were glad to see him, for he always had a cheery greeting for them besides being careful of them and making it comfortable for them as they worked.

Boaz had come to look over his fields and to talk with the overseer about the crops, when he saw Ruth not far from where he was standing. She was so busy gleaning she had not noticed him. He was interested at once in what had brought this stranger to his fields, and asked his overseer who she was and where she came from. The man replied that she was the Moabitess, Ruth, the widow of Mahlon and daughter-in-law of Naomi, who had just come back from Moab. Ruth had loved Naomi so much she had come to the Hebrews' country, leaving her parents and friends and even her god for the sake of being with her mother-in-law.

What a pretty picture she made as she stood there in the sunshine brushing aside the dark curls that would get into her eyes! Such clear, fearless eyes they were that it gave one courage to look at them. Did she ever get tired, Boaz wondered, as she easily bent down to the ground picking up grain, and as quickly straightened herself again to drop the kernels into her wide, flowing apron.

He watched her as she followed the reapers. Then turning to his young men, he told them to

treat the stranger well, to drop plenty of grain for her to glean, and to see that she had good, fresh water to drink. He sent a greeting to Ruth by his reapers, and later he went himself and spoke to her, saying, "Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither pass from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens. Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn."

Falling on her face — the way of greeting a superior in rank — Ruth replied, "Why have I found favor in thy sight, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a foreigner?"

Boaz answered that he had heard of her kindness to her mother-in-law, that she had left her country and her god to be with the Hebrews and worship Jehovah; and he added, "Jehovah recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of Jehovah, the God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to take refuge."

His wish for Ruth was really a promise, for he intended to do himself what he had asked the God of Israel to do for her. Many good people are full of kind wishes for others, but they never do anything but wish, and a man like Boaz knew that wishing without acting was not worth much.

Then the hot noon came. The blazing sun that had beaten on the workers all the morning was almost unbearable, and, like all workers in our day, they began to think of resting and having something to eat. Some shady spot, perhaps near a well of water, was soon found, and they all sat on the ground around the dinner of parched corn, bread, and vinegar. "Ugh," I can hear you say, what a meal for hungry people! Did anyone eat anything?" Indeed they did, and were very glad to get it. In that day it was a bounteous meal for reapers and gleaners, for sometimes the gleaners got nothing at all to eat.

Boaz had invited Ruth to eat with them, and looked out for her wants so carefully that after she had finished eating she had enough to take home to her mother-in-law.

Naomi may not have relished the vinegar, which was a sour wine and a very cool and popular drink in that hot country, nor had as much appetite for the parched corn—ears of wheat roasted and the kernels shaken out—as had Ruth. Work and a cheery spirit give one an appetite, while staying at home with gloomy thoughts and wondering what evil thing is going to happen next, would make the daintiest food taste bad. Try it yourselves and see.

Back to the fields went Ruth after dinner and gleaned until dusk. Then she beat out the grain with stones until she had "about an ephah of barley," which is nearly a bushel. Think of working in the fields from sunrise until sunset for only a bushel of barley, and being thankful for it! But our heroine Ruth had learned that being glad made other people glad, and that when one was happy things went much better.

We can see her as she flew along the path to her home, singing as she went, and eager to cheer Naomi with the good news of the day. Wouldn't Naomi's sad face lighten when she heard of Boaz and of his kindness to the little Moabitish stranger?

Naomi was anxiously watching for Ruth, and asked at once where she had gleaned and if people had been kind to her. Of course they had been kind, thought her mother-in-law, for who could help being kind to Ruth?

When Ruth told her of Boaz, Naomi must have felt ashamed that she had not herself thought of this kind kinsman. And why had she not? I fear she had formed such a habit of being miserable that she could not see a blessing unless someone like Ruth showed it to her. And how glad she must have been that she had Ruth to do this.

Ruth was sure of work until the harvest was over, for Boaz had told her to stay in his fields until all the grains were harvested. Right after the barley, the wheat and other grains would be ready, which meant a period of work for six or eight weeks. Boaz seemed every day to grow kinder and more thoughtful of Ruth's comfort, and often came to her side of the field and talked with her. She must have told him of her life in Moab—how happy they all were together until Mahlon, Chilion, and Elimelech had died; how discouraged her mother-in-law

had been ever since, and how she hoped to earn enough to make them a little home once more. Of course it would never be the same again without the three who had gone, but they had each other, and that was something to be thankful for.

Naomi was encouraged to learn that Ruth was to keep gleaning in Boaz' fields, and she began to think and plan for her. Why, she said to herself, would n't Boaz make Ruth a good husband? He is fond of her and she would make any man a good wife. But of these things she said nothing to Ruth until the end of the harvest. It was better not to speak too soon, for that might spoil it all.

At last the reapers and the gleaners were through, the grain was ready to be threshed, and the time had come for Naomi to act and tell Ruth of her plan. When Ruth came in from the fields that evening, Naomi told her to wash and anoint herself. How astonished Ruth must have been to receive such directions from the sad Naomi! Why? Because washing and anointing in those days meant joy. When people were in mourning, especially if their

grief was very bitter, they went unwashed and did not anoint themselves.

Naomi thought a careful man like Boaz would probably sleep at the threshing floor and watch that none of his grain was stolen, so she said to Ruth, "My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? And now is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to-night in the threshing-floor. Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the threshing-floor; but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet" — this was an oriental way of placing herself under his protection. In those days people often made known their thoughts to one another by means of symbolic acts instead of by using words — "and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do."

Ruth answered Naomi, "All that thou sayest I will do." She loved Boaz and knew that

as he was a kinsman of her husband she had a right to ask for his protection. In those days any widow could claim the protection of her husband's brother, or, if he had no brothers, of the next nearest relative. But sometimes the near relative refused to care for the widow, in which case his name was called "The house of him that hath his shoe loosed."

Ruth made herself ready as her mother-in-law had told her to do, and after kissing Naomi good-by hurried to the threshing-floor, which was only a piece of open ground beaten hard. She was greeted by Boaz, who was pleased to see her and told her to take home as much barley as she could carry. She watched the patient oxen as they threshed the grain, and listened to the shouts of their drivers until all was finished and the tired workers lay down to rest for the night.

When Boaz lay down to sleep, Ruth was to go and lie down at his feet, after uncovering them. At midnight Boaz was startled, and wakening, discovered someone lying at his feet. He asked, "Who art thou?" Ruth answered, "I am Ruth thy handmaid; spread therefore

thy skirt over thy handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman." She meant by near kinsman one who could by law redeem her mother-in-law's property and give it back to the two women.

The heart of Boaz went out to Ruth, for he had noticed she did not follow any of the men, young or old, among the reapers and gleaners. She worked hard, caring for her mother-in-law and herself, and Boaz had great respect for her. He explained to her that he really did not have the right to redeem Naomi's property as there was a nearer kinsman than himself. He promised that he would go the next morning and insist that the nearer kinsman either redeem the property or refuse to do it. If the kinsman refused, Boaz would be free to redeem it himself and would do so.

Early in the morning, before it was light, Ruth returned to Naomi carrying a present of barley from Boaz to her mother-in-law. Naomi was very happy. She felt that Ruth was now going to be cared for by her wealthy kinsman and that all her sorrows would soon be turned into joy.

And so it proved. "Boaz," you know, means "fleetness," and surely our hero deserved the name, for he lost no time in going to the gate of the city, calling the elders together, and asking the next of kin to Naomi if he was willing to redeem her property. The man was willing. People desired property then as they do now, especially if it comes as easily as this near kinsman thought it was going to come to him. When it was only some money to be paid out for presumably a good piece of land joining his own, he was willing to obey the law for the "next of kin"; but, like his brothers and sisters of to-day, when obedience meant personal sacrifice he had some excuse to offer for not obeying. This was the law: If a man died leaving a wife without children, usually the dead man's brother, sometimes a near relative, was to marry the widow, and her first child took the dead man's name and was considered the son of the dead man and inherited his property. Boaz knew this, and tested the sincerity of the nearer kinsman by first offering him the property, afterward saying, "What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of

Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance."

The nearer kinsman replied, "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar my own inheritance: take thou my right of redemption on thee; for I cannot redeem it."

As you see, he was purely selfish, thinking only of himself and his inheritance which might be injured by obeying the conditions of the law of the brother-in-law.

Boaz loved Ruth and intended to marry her and redeem the property, but in all his dealings he was just and fair, so he gave the nearer kinsman a chance before he offered to redeem the property himself.

The nearer kinsman, learning that he had to make some sacrifice to get the property, at once drew off his shoe and handed it to Boaz. "How silly!" you say. "What has taking off a shoe to do with selling property?" In the time of the Judges that act meant something. As I have already told you, in those days people did not have as many words to use as they do now and so they talked to each other in what we call

symbolic acts. Taking off his shoe and handing it to Boaz meant that he gave up his claim on the property and upon Ruth, and gave to Boaz the right to redeem them.

Boaz very wisely called the elders of the people together as witnesses to his agreement with the nearer kinsman, because he wanted no trouble if afterward the kinsman should change his mind. And to the elders and to all of the people he said, "Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover, Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day."

The people crowded about him, wishing both him and Ruth joy in their married life, saying, "We are witnesses. Jehovah make the woman that is come into thy house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephrathah, and be famous in Bethlehem."

If you have read the parables in the New Testament, many of which describe weddings, you will know what they did at the marriage of Ruth and Boaz.

I am sorry about Naomi. Even with all the joy going on she seemed to be gloomy. Perhaps she had formed such a habit of being miserable that it was hard for her to give it up. But a cheerful spirit has to be made a habit just as music has to be practiced if one wants to succeed. Practice cheerfulness for one day only and see what a difference it makes. Ruth had learned the habit of being happy until she really could not help it.

Naomi never seemed to see a blessing unless someone told her of it, for when Ruth's little son, Obed, was born the neighbors had to say to her, "Blessed be Jehovah, who hath not left thee this day without a near kinsman; and let his name be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of life, and a nourisher of thine old age; for thy daughter-in-law, who loveth thee, who is better to thee than seven sons, hath borne him." That this comforted Naomi we know, for she "took the child, and laid

it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it." The little Obed became the grandfather of King David. "Is it true," you ask, "that Ruth's cheery, loving spirit could win so much good fortune?" Look about you at the people you know and answer this question for yourselves.

THE LITTLE MAID OF GILEAD

JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER

All people have birthdays once a year. "My sister has a birthday only every four years," interrupts one of my listeners. A leap year baby she must be. Think of it, her first birthday cake can have four candles on it! But did you ever hear of anyone having four birthdays in the same year? "Impossible!" do you say? Perhaps, from your way of looking at it, but after you have heard my story you may think that even four birthdays a year are not enough.

The little maid of whom I am going to tell you had passed only fourteen of those single yearly birthdays when she performed such a brave act that her country said she must thereafter have four days a year celebrated in her honor.

She was a little creature, all smiles, and as her feet danced in and out of her father's tent he often called her his sunshine. She was up with the birds in the morning, teasing her father awake by stroking his eyelids with a feather. Then he dressed quickly and together they went

outside the tent and knelt beside the flat stone while they called upon Jehovah to protect them through the day and to give them success in whatever they might do.

A slave from the doorway called them to breakfast and poured water upon their hands as they squatted before the dish which held their food, for, as we know, fingers were used instead of knives and forks.

Three loaves of bread were placed before each of them. A healthy, hungry girl and a man who spent his days in fighting must have enough to eat.

"Three loaves of bread!" I hear you say, "How could they eat so much?"

Their loaves you would call biscuits, so there were not any more than everyone in those times expected to eat at a meal.

Their breakfast over, they again gave thanks to Jehovah. The father strapped on his sword, and Judith watched as he bounded down the mountain side.

Jephthah—for that was the man's name—and Judith, his daughter, lived in the times of the Judges—wild, rough times such as the early

settlers had when they first came to America. Just as the Indians fought the settlers, the people of Canaan fought the Hebrews who tried to settle among them and make homes for themselves. Many of the people of Israel were still wandering about and living in tents.

A man might be rich at night and poor the next morning. While he slept his cattle and household goods might be stolen, his fields burned, and he with his family rudely awakened and driven from the country.

This had happened to Jephthah. His own brothers had turned him out of their home and refused to share their father's property with him. But he was "a man of valor," used to fighting, so he went to the mountains of Gilead and became chief of a lawless band of men as powerful as himself in war.

In those days might was right. The fighter with the strongest muscles was the most respected because he was the most feared. Fear was really the god of the people. And when people are badly frightened and always expecting to be hurt, it is no wonder that they act foolishly and wickedly. But these people of long ago did the

best they knew how to do, which is all we can expect of anyone.

You have been in a crowd and had to force your way through it. Of course you were careful not to step on anyone's toes or to hurt anyone. You think strangers have rights which you try to respect. But in the times of the Judges strangers did not count. It was only one's family and relatives that were given attention or received courtesy. The country was small, the people many, and often they suffered for want of room. To make a place for themselves they used the sword, and the weak were destroyed in order that the strong might have more space to feed their cattle, grow their crops, and build their cities.

The people who lived in the mountains were the most fearless because they were the safest from their enemies. Our little heroine Judith was a maid of the mountains. She could skip nimbly across rushing mountain torrents, run races with the mountain goats, and often delighted to shout aloud so that she might hear her voice bound back to her from the rocky peaks. She knew every foot of the hills, had

explored their dark caverns, and at one time had climbed down a steep ravine to rescue a tiny lamb that had slipped into its depths. A strong, healthy, happy little lass was she. With a song she welcomed the morning sun, and as she held out her arms to the stars she sang them a good-night.

Some of you young people from the high school look as though you would like to ask me a question.

"Yes," replies a boy, "we would. We want to know where in the Bible you find all you are telling about Jephthah and his daughter."

We do not find it all in Scripture. About these two people who did the best they knew how to do—although that "best" was wrong—there is little told us in this truly beautiful Bible story. But we can find out more about them by reading histories of those times and of the customs of those people. With this knowledge and what the Bible gives us we make our story.

"I like that way," adds a girl. "It seems to bring them closer to us and makes real people of them."

It was evening as Jephthah came wearily up the mountain side. He stopped to stroke the faithful dog that met him and to count the sheep over which the dog kept watch. A flock of doves scattered as he approached, and a little calf bleated from the doorway of the tent. Probably Judith had thought it needed extra care and had brought it from the pasture. A slave saw him coming and ran to meet him, received his sword and mantle, and made him comfortable in the tent.

"Where is Judith?" asked her father of the slave.

He was answered by a peal of laughter from the child, as, hidden behind a curtain, she watched while her father searched for her. Soon she was found and they sat down to their evening meal. When it was over they sat in the door of the tent, and the stern, fierce warrior listened with joy to the voice of his child as she told him of her day's work and play.

"It is good to live, father," she said, "and I love to live."

Words well spoken, little maid. To-night they make your father glad; but to-morrow is

coming, and with it those words will fall upon his heart like stones.

Some elderly men with distressed faces came toward their tent, but were relieved as Jephthah arose and greeted them.

"Why do you seek me?" Jephthah asked them. "It is but a little while since you with my brothers drove me from my father's house and country."

"The Ammonites are troubling us; they are burning our villages and carrying away our children and our cattle. Each day is worse than the one before and we have no power to resist these enemies," the men replied.

"Why have you no power? Is strength departed from Israel that you come to me now that you are in distress?"

Bowing to the ground before them as he spoke these words, Jephthah motioned to them to enter the tent and be seated. As he offered them food and drink his visitors became encouraged, for this act meant that he was friendly to them and to their cause.

The eldest man among them strode to the tent door. His white hair falling over his

shoulders and white beard touching the girdle at his waist gave him an appearance of great age. Lifting the curtain of the door he raised his arm and, pointing to the stars, replied to Jephthah, "As is the number of the stars, so is the number of the children of Israel, but there are none among them as mighty as yourself. They need your help."

The others joined their voices with his and urged upon Jephthah their need of him as a leader, and their need, too, of his dreaded warriors, saying, "Therefore are we turned again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us, and fight with the children of Ammon, and thou shalt be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead."

"If this be so," answered Jephthah, "I will go with you."

The men arose and swore in the name of Jehovah that they would keep their word. The old man stood in their midst and raised his hands in blessing, his long, flowing robes fluttering in the rising wind which swept in through the open door of the tent.

Jephthah drew his robes close about him, fastening them in tight with his girdle. The

loose upper garment must be laid aside. It would hinder his speed when he was walking or riding. He reached for his sword—dropped it—and over his face there flashed a momentary fear.

What was it that moaned outside the tent?

He listened, then laughed as the wild wind shrieked by his tent door and sobbed itself out on the distant mountain peaks.

At his feet something glistened. He stooped and picked it up, but let it fall—it was red, the color of blood. His superstitious fancy wondered if it could be an omen of evil. Was his errand to be one of harm to himself? But no, it was only Judith's spangled red turban which the wind had torn from its peg and thrown at his feet.

Judith! He had forgotten her, for the urgency of his errand and the terrible need of his visitors had crowded all else out of his mind.

He must leave her, but she was safe with her maidens, and the slaves were faithful. Surely no danger could come to her, secure in the mountain stronghold. She would not need the

protection of his band of warriors who were to go with him.

He stepped to a little tent near his own, lifted the curtain which screened the door, and looked lovingly upon his sleeping child. He did not waken her with a good-by. She was a brave little lass, but the errand upon which he was going was a dangerous one and he might never return to her. The daughter of Jephthah, "the mighty man of valor," he knew would meet her father's loss with a spirit as strong as his own, and there was no need to trouble her now.

He stroked with tenderness the locks of sunny hair. There was a ruddy gleam in them like the waving of flames. He listened as her lips moved. What was she saying as she slept? It was not clear, but he remembered the words she had spoken just before their guests had arrived, and he felt them echo in his heart: "I love to live, father. It is good to live."

Then out into the night he and his visitors went, stopping only to summon all his fighting men. In the morning he would send messengers to the king of the Ammonites and demand of

him why he and his people should war upon Israel.

When the sun rose again it looked down upon two armies. One was the host of Israel, the other that of the children of Ammon. Out from the camp of Israel rode Jephthah's courier with a message to the king of Ammon.

"Why do you trouble Israel?" was its refrain.

"Because," replied the king, "your people have stolen the land of the Ammonites and will not return it to us."

"Not so," answered Jephthah. "We did not steal; we won it in a fair battle. If our God Jehovah gives us strength to win, and your god Chemosh cannot protect you, it is not our sin but our greater strength which has given us the land."

"But God is not in battles," I hear some of you children say. "He is the Prince of Peace."

In the days of our story, peace as we understand it was not known. To people of those times God was power, a being like themselves, who led in war and gloried in victory over His weaker enemies. They had forgotten Moses and his merciful laws, Abraham and his faith

in God's goodness, Isaac and Jacob with their belief in God as the source only of blessing. If they remembered those days at all, it was only as so many stories which their parents had told them and which few of them believed.

They had not obeyed Joshua's command to drive out all the inhabitants of Canaan, the promised land. It was too hard work, and so they had done the easier way — settled among the other nations, adopted their idolatrous customs, and worshiped the horrible gods, Molech, Baal, and Chemosh.

Even our poor Jephthah had lived so long among the Ammonites that he had forgotten about Israel's God of mercy. Jehovah was to him the same as the other gods, the only difference being that He, Jehovah, favored Israel. Once the Hebrew people had known better, but this is not a story of those times, nor of the "beginning time." It is a story of the time of the Judges.

In our day when we move into a new house or city, we think we should be settled and feel at home in our new quarters in a fortnight. But when Israel moved from Egypt to Canaan, it

took forty years to get there and about three hundred years to get thoroughly settled and be at home. It was this "settling" season that was the time of the Judges.

"We will war against you and regain our land," was the message sent back to Jephthah from the king of Ammon.

Like two boys quarreling and each telling the other how badly the other had acted, the king and Jephthah grew angrier as their messages flew back and forth. Jephthah lost both his patience and his good sense. For the moment he forgot everything but the desire to conquer the enemy who dared defy him. From his lips there issued a vow such as the heathen made, but which no Israelite faithful to the law of Moses would utter. He thought that he had called upon Jehovah—but had he? Did not the God of Israel say, "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice?"

What was that vow? "If thou wilt indeed deliver the children of Ammon into my hand, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth from the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, it

shall be Jehovah's, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering."

Beware, Jephthah! Your vow cannot stand before Jehovah. He who "desireth not the death of a sinner" and whose hand is always stretched out to save, has not heard. Although you have used His name, it is not Jehovah, but the black-starred god of ill-omen, Chemosh; or Molech, the remorseless fire god always hungry for human sacrifice, on whom you have called.

"Why did he make such a vow? Did n't he know any better?" you are asking.

No, he was half heathen. He had lived many years among the Ammonites, ever since his brother and his people had driven him from home. The half-savage heathen and rough companions had been his only friends. Even the Israelites were serving the gods of the heathen, who worshiped idols. Constant fear and fighting had made them all think of Jehovah as a god of war with little or no mercy. Their lips said Jehovah, but their hearts gave him the character of the heathen gods. So can you wonder that Jephthah often confused the

worship of Jehovah with that of the fire god of the Ammonites?

He may have thought that the promise he made was a safe one. He had plenty of cattle, sheep, doves, and slaves. "The doors of his house" meant anything possessed by him or found on his land. To choose from these for a sacrifice would be a simple matter.

Hebrew law forbade human sacrifice, and anyone making his child "pass through the fire" was to be stoned to death. But those laws had been hidden away for so many years that they probably had been forgotten. "Strange!" you say. Why so? We know that even in our day good laws sometimes are forgotten.

A slave or some animal would meet him. What cared he for a slave's life or that of a captive taken in battle? He was as familiar with the altars of Chemosh and their burning victims as you are with your church spires that point upward.

His vow was wrong, but it was earnest and sincere. He meant no harm but, like the sword which turned every way guarding the gates of

Eden, it turned against himself—a way wrong things have of doing.

"Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God . . . . Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin." Had Jephthah thought, he might have said these words which were later spoken by a Hebrew preacher, for they were just as true in Jephthah's day as they were in the time of the Hebrew preacher. What was the matter with his memory when he counted his possessions, that he should have forgotten the gem of them all, his daughter?

Moses and Joshua had warned Israel that the promised land was given them in order that they might serve Jehovah there. If they disobeyed his laws they were to lose all they had. They had not obeyed, but instead had served idols. So Jephthah, following their example, taking heathen oaths in Jehovah's name, lost his all.

He was victorious; he fought with and routed the Ammonites with unpitying slaughter, and returned to Gilead the hero of his people. He did not stay to hear their praises. His heart

JUDITH, THE DAUGHTER OF JEPHTHAH

was in the mountains. A little dark-eyed laughing girl was waiting for him, eager to hear of her father's triumph. It was nightfall when he and his men reached the foot of the hills. Long shadows were filling the valley and hiding the paths, so they rested there until morning came.

Jephthah looked toward the darkening heights and smiled as he stretched his arms out toward them. Home is there and it is there I have peace, thought the warrior. Why does he shudder? The night air is not chill. Has sleep departed from you, "man of valor," that you must pace back and forth in the silent night? That sound is nothing. You have heard it often. It is but the sob of a dying sheep which a wolf has caught

Peace will come with the morning, thought Jephthah. But alas, no! The shadow of that vow, blacker a hundred times than the inky cloud which floats across the moon, is folding its somber wings to rest upon his household. Peace has departed from him. It was in the powers of darkness that he trusted. He who has vowed to sacrifice another must lay his own heart upon the altar.

Morning came. Thousands of dew diamonds trembled on the meadow grasses. The sleepy birds had barely opened their eyes when Jephthah and his men begin their upward journey. Why do you hesitate, mighty warrior? The path is not rough; neither is it strange. Can a warrior like yourself be wearied with a little climb like this? Besides, home and your daughter are beyond.

Judith, too, was an early riser. Early in the morning father will be here, sang the maiden to herself. She will surprise him. Though everything and everybody be asleep, she will show her pride in her father's victory by being the first one to meet him in the early dawn.

Some of the stars were still in the heavens when she stole out of the tent and down the mountain side. Peering over the cliffs she saw him coming, and with dancing feet, shaking her timbrel and singing, she went to meet him.

He heard her voice, but no arms of welcome were outstretched to meet her. In agony the words of his horrible vow swept through his mind, and as he rent his garments, his voice, hoarse with grief, replied to her joyous greeting,

"Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me; for I have opened my mouth unto Jehovah, and I cannot go back."

Did the little maid flinch? No, the spirit of Jephthah's daughter rose to meet his own, and the "mighty man of valor" looked into the steady eyes of a fearless maid. Whatever her father had promised to do should be done.

"But," you are saying, "he had no right to sacrifice his daughter. Besides, he must have her consent, for she was over twelve years old, when a Hebrew girl was of age."

But to these two an oath was not lightly taken, nor could it be honorably broken. And, too, the merciful laws of Moses had been forgotten, and the heathen gods of vengeance had been so long feared and worshiped that into their minds came nothing but the unpitying demands of that unrighteous vow.

With choking sobs Jephthah told his daughter of his vow. She need not keep it. Israel's law protected her. For his country her father had risked his life. Should the daughter of a hero do less than to give her own? So thinking,

Judith answered her father, "My father, thou hast opened thy mouth unto Jehovah; do unto me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth, forasmuch as Jehovah hast taken vengeance for thee on thine enemies, even on the children of Ammon."

For her country and her father she would do this thing, even as the brave Joan of Arc centuries later died for her country. The little shepherd maid of France had a forerunner in the maid of Gilead — the one chained to the stake to perish in the flames, the other laid upon the altar of fire. Both died because they believed that in making such a sacrifice they served their country and their God. You young people interested in history and who have shed tears over Joan of Arc's cruel fate, did not know that in the pages of the Bible there was a heroine as brave as she.

Judith made but one request. The child who loved to live wanted to spend two months with her companions on the mountain side. Together they would lament this awful sacrifice, this useless destruction of a life that had filled its own and that of others with sunshine. And

the pity of it was they did not know it need not be. The time had not yet come when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea."

When the two months were over, the child returned to her father's tent . . . .

Against a gray sky from a mountain peak there rose tongues of flame. The gray of the clouds changed to crimson. Did they blush with shame at the awful deed they witnessed as Jephthah's vow was kept? Or did they promise pardon for this act of ignorance?

The night was black. There was nothing on the hilltop but smoldering ashes which the swiftly coming storm would soon scatter. A man in sackcloth with ashes on his head mourned as he sat alone. The wind tore at his tent door and hurled something at his feet; it was only a jeweled red turban, but the man's fingers closed upon it with a groan.

"It is good to live," the little maid had said. And she did live in the hearts of Israel. "And it was a custom in Israel, that the daughters of Israel went yearly to celebrate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year."

WHAT A LITTLE BOY TAUGHT A BIG MAN

SAMUEL AND ELI

He was such a pretty little fellow with dancing black eyes and curly head, and he was going on a journey with his parents, Elkanah and Hannah. It was his first journey, and he could hardly wait for them to start. A few hours is a long time to a boy only three years old. His mother, Hannah, stopped suddenly in her packing and, running out to him, hugged and kissed him until he struggled to be free. Then Elkanah, his father, took him in his arms and acted as if he never wanted to put him down again.

The servants were busy yoking the oxen and saddling the donkeys. There was no express in those days. When people traveled, donkeys or camels had to carry great bags filled with whatever they needed. The family rode in the ox-cart or walked. I think sometimes they walked in order to rest, for the carts had no springs and must have jounced and jolted

them terribly. But as they knew no better way of traveling, they were content and probably thought they were very fortunate to have such a fine ox-cart to ride in.

Our little black-eyed boy danced about, clapping his hands and shouting to the oxen or stopping a moment to pat the sleek sides of the gentle donkeys. His mother was hugging a little frock she had made him, and her lips moved as she carefully folded it away in the big bundle which served these people as a trunk. And his father said, "Jehovah bless him!" as the bundle was tied together and hoisted on a donkey's back. Our little lad was going with his parents, but he would not come back with them. He was to stay in the temple with the priests and wear the tiny dress his mother had packed so carefully.

These people were Israelites, and they lived so long ago that if it were not for our Bible, and the stones or bricks that people have found buried in the ground and covered with curious writing, we should never have known anything about them. They lived in Ramah, among the hills of Ephraim, and they were going to Shiloh,

where the temple of God was, to offer the yearly sacrifice. The baby was not to be left behind because his parents were too poor to care for him, for they had many cattle, and sheep, and everything which in that time made people rich. They were going to leave him because his mother had promised Jehovah before he was born that she would give the child to the Lord and that he should serve in the temple of Jehovah all the days of his life.

"Why did she do that?" you ask. "Didn't she love children?"

Yes, she loved children very much, but she had never had any of her own. Elkanah's other wife—for in those days a man had more than one wife—had several children. This disturbed Hannah and made her very unhappy when they all, big people and little people, went once a year to Shiloh to worship and to sacrifice in the temple. Her husband loved her more than he loved his other wife, Peninnah, but this did not satisfy Hannah, for what she wanted more than anything else she did not have. We all know how it feels, don't we, to want something very, very much and not get it? We even

forget at these times the good things we already have.

At one time when she was in Shiloh she had grieved so much that she could not eat, and Elkanah tried to comfort her by saying, "Am not I better to thee than ten sons?" But Hannah would not be comforted. She determined to go to the temple alone while Peninnah and her children were enjoying the gifts which Elkanah always gave them at the time of the yearly sacrifices. Hannah had her share of gifts also, but when one's heart is as sad as hers presents don't make one happy.

Hannah had learned that God was the real helper of His people and that He was always ready to give good things to them that asked Him. She remembered the stories her mother had told her of Jehovah's feeding and caring for her people during their forty years in the wilderness and how many times He had delivered them from their enemies. She was in trouble. Jehovah had promised to help. She had been taught that she should always keep her promises, and why shouldn't she expect God to keep His?

She would try, anyway. One other thing she intended to do: she would not be selfish in her prayer, but was willing to give all she had, if it was necessary, to win from God the blessing she craved. As she stood praying at the temple door she did not see Eli, the high priest, watching her and wondering why her lips moved when she did not speak. But when he said to her, "How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee," Hannah answered:

"I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before Jehovah."

Would you like to know what it was that Hannah prayed with her heart when her lips were silent? She did not waste any words but asked at once for what she wanted. If Jehovah knew her need and would give to her the gift that she asked, why trouble Him with words?

Hannah's prayer and vow were, "O Jehovah of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thy handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thy handmaid, but wilt give unto thy handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto Jehovah all the days of his life."

She would not ask to keep him with her as other mothers did. She would be glad to give back to the Lord the child that He gave to her, and all his life he should serve in God's temple.

When she left the temple after her prayer, Eli gave her his blessing, saying, "Go in peace; and the God of Israel grant thy petition that thou hast asked of Him." Hannah had come in sorrowful and she went out glad. Her prayer, she knew, had been heard and Jehovah would answer. She "went her way, and did eat; and her countenance was no more sad." In other words, her face was changed.

Do you remember the different persons in the Bible whose faces changed? Moses, when he came down from the mount with the law, put a veil over his face because it shone so. The face of Jesus was changed on the mount of Transfiguration. And Stephen the martyr had such a radiant expression when he was being stoned that even his enemies said he had the face of an angel.

What made them shine? The next time you see anyone whose face looks as though it

had a light behind it, ask him, for such a person is the only one who will be able to tell you.

Another year passed, and again all the family went to Shiloh except Hannah. The answer to her prayer—her little son Samuel—had come, and he was too small a baby to take on so long a journey. She would not go up to Shiloh again until he was weaned; that is, until he was about three years old.

Now you know that the little black-eyed fellow in such a hurry to start on his first journey was Samuel and that the time had come for his mother to fulfill her vow. All the family went up together to Shiloh, the one wife with her many children, who would all return with her, and Hannah with her only child, who would be left behind.

Hannah's face, I am sure, was still shining. God kept His promises; why should she be sad? Also on her journey to the temple she must have been thinking of the great man she wanted her son to be. And had she not made him a tiny dress that was now carefully folded away in that big bundle, a dress exactly like the robe of the high priest, which none but he ever wore?

And every year when she should visit him she would bring him another just like the first, but larger.

Three years and more had passed since Hannah had stood praying at the temple door. Eli might not remember her, so she said to him, "My lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto Jehovah. For this child I prayed; and Jehovah hath given me my petition which I asked of Him; therefore also I have granted him to Jehovah."

Then the tiny lad said his prayer, or, as the Bible says, "worshipped Jehovah there." His mother had taught him to pray and told him that prayers were answered, therefore he must be careful for what he prayed. She remembered how her people, the Israelites, had asked a favor of God, something they were better off without, and "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul."

Hannah had more faith in good than she had fear of evil, for the three priests with whom she left the child were bad men. Eli was so weak that his two wicked sons did just as they pleased. He meant well and preferred to live right, but

when he allowed himself to be ruled by his sons, things went just as wrong as though he was wicked himself. He found out later that it is not good intentions but good acts that please God, and also please people. He often told his sons that they were wicked and should do better, but as he never did anything but find fault with them they only laughed and kept growing worse.

He was like a boy who was asked to help some of the younger children with their lessons. When a child misspelled a word or put down a wrong figure, he would say, "That is wrong. You should not do that," but let the mistake go without correcting it.

These conditions did not disturb Hannah. If God had given her the child, God was certainly able to care for him. And she, like David, had faith in an invisible Power, and knew that three priests disobeying God's laws were not as powerful as one person obeying those laws, even if that one were only a little child. Samuel had been taught to obey and always obeyed, as we know from the words he spoke years afterward to the rebellious King Saul: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to

hearken than the fat of rams." You have heard many times that "he who would command must first learn to obey." So Hannah, desiring her son to be a great man with power, began in the right way to have it so.

Our little boy was given a cot in the temple near where Eli slept. At first he was too small to be very useful, but as he grew older he opened the doors of the temple at sunrise and closed them again as the sun set. Also at night he kept bright the lights that burned in the great seven-branched candlestick that was almost as tall as his father, and was careful that the center light burned until morning. Eli loved the little fellow for he gave him an ephod to wear. An ephod was worn only by the high priest. If you take a long linen towel and fold it in the middle, then cut it in two along this fold, fasten it together on the shoulders with jeweled clasps, letting one piece cover the back, the other hang down in front, you will have something like an ephod. For the high priest these ephods were of finer linen than the ephods that other people sometimes were allowed to wear. Its colors were gold, blue, purple, and scarlet, with a

girdle of the same material embroidered in the same pattern. Two onyx stones were engraved with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, six names for each shoulder.

Whenever the high priest stood before Jehovah he carried all Israel on his shoulders. His prayers must not be selfish; he must remember his people when he prayed. Praying, you see, was made a responsibility. The little boy who had been taught to listen, and to obey when he heard, must have known all about these shoulder stones which fastened his ephod, and have realized that in order to please Jehovah he must ask blessings for others as well as for himself. That he did so we know, for the Bible says of him, "And the child Samuel grew on, and increased in favor both with Jehovah, and also with men."

Samuel was about twelve years old when a prophet came to the temple and warned Eli that, because of his weakness and his sons' wickedness, Jehovah would take the priesthood from them and give it to some one who was worthy. Eli was disturbed only a little. Members of his family had held the priesthood for

so long that he thought they would always have it, but he had to learn that the only way to keep anything is to deserve it. Poor, kind-hearted Eli, wanting to do right but without the strength to do it, got himself, his sons, and his people into much trouble. The people had noticed the difference between the high priest's family and the boy Samuel. What power was it, they thought, that kept this child from evil ways? Could it be that Jehovah was with him? They began to believe so. Though only twelve years old, the boy was able to show them all what real faith in Jehovah did for one.

Our little lad, without knowing it, had taught the people a lesson, and soon he was to teach one to Eli. If the priests had forgotten Jehovah, is it a wonder that most of the people had? "The word of Jehovah was precious (not often heard) in those days; there was no frequent, well-known vision."

At last the night came when the boy Samuel heard and obeyed the voice of God. He had closed the temple doors that evening and had seen that the seven lights of the golden candlestick were burning. Like the boys of his day,

he loved the stars. The traveler at night had no other guide, and Samuel loved to watch the stars and wonder if they were eyes through which Jehovah looked in the darkness to see that no harm came to the earth while the sun was gone. He knew that the color of the ephod he wore was like that of the sky which held the stars, and that the twinkling stars themselves shone as brightly as the ephod's gold. Perhaps he felt what David said later: "The heavens declare the glory of God." Having such thoughts as these, do you wonder that he heard God's voice? Such thinking is really listening to God, but he did not know it.

Are you surprised that God did not speak to Eli or to his sons, the priests of the temple, instead of to this young lad? Do you like to talk to people who are not listening to you? If one is not listening he cannot hear, can he? Samuel was listening; Eli and his sons were not. The sons had forgotten all about Jehovah's laws, while Eli knew that he had disobeyed them and deserved punishment.

How still and peaceful the night was as Eli and Samuel lay asleep! Eli perhaps had

uneasy dreams about his sons; Samuel lay in the sound sleep of a healthy boy. Then suddenly the child heard his name called, "Samuel, Samuel," and thinking that Eli needed him, he jumped from his bed and ran to Eli, saying, "Here am I; for thou calledst me." Eli did not like having his sleep disturbed so soon, so he said shortly, "I called not; lie down again."

"Samuel, Samuel," called the voice again, and the boy once more went to Eli with the same cheery greeting, "Here am I." This time Eli was awake and answered more pleasantly, for he called Samuel "my son," but again he told the child to lie down as he had not spoken. Perhaps by this time he was wondering what the boy had heard. He did not have long to wait, for soon the lad returned, insisting that Eli had called him. Eli knew now that Jehovah had spoken to Samuel. He knew the place for God to speak was in His own temple, and the lad was the only one in that temple who had ears to hear. So he said, "Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Jehovah; for Thy servant heareth."

Poor Eli, telling a little child to do what he knew how to do but had not done! Eli meant to do right, but did wrong. At that hour did he grieve because he had lost the power to hear God's voice, and did he see in the call of this little child that the priesthood had indeed passed from himself and his sons?

There was nothing unusual in God's calling Samuel. Everyone in Israel had been taught that Jehovah was always calling to His people. Had not Moses told them, "The word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart?" The unusual thing was listening and obeying when one heard.

When Samuel heard his name spoken again, he answered bravely, "Speak; for thy servant heareth."

Have any of you boys or girls noticed the different ways that people answer when their names are called? Some drawl, others mumble, while often you hear a cheery, quick response like Samuel's. I say he answered bravely, because when one replies as he did it means that he is not afraid of anything he may be asked to do. To the waiting, listening lad came the

warning to Eli's house—that same warning which only a short time before the strange prophet had spoken to the high priest: "Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from the beginning even unto the end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons did bring a curse upon themselves, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated with sacrifice nor offering for ever."

All night the boy lay quietly thinking, sorry for Eli, whom he loved, and who was kind if he was weak. He knew he must tell the high priest what God's law does to the disobedient, but he was unhappy that he must take such a message to his friend. Soon the stars began to grow dim and rosy streaks shot across the sky. Samuel knew them well, for he had watched for them every morning for many years and knew when they came it was time to open the temple

doors. The scarlet in his ephod was like these crimson tongues of cloud, and the blue of the morning sky was like the ephod's blue.

Samuel did not rush to Eli the first thing in the morning and deliver his message. He had it to do and would not flinch, but his love for Eli made him wait until the high priest spoke.

"Samuel, my son," said Eli, and the cheery, honest voice of the little lad rang out, "Here am I."

"What is the thing that Jehovah hath spoken unto thee? I pray thee, hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide anything from me of all the things that He spake unto thee."

Samuel answered. He loved the truth and he obeyed, so he gave to Eli the message—all of it. The spirit he gave it in must have been kinder than that of the strange prophet, for Eli listened to the boy; he had not listened to the prophet. The words were bitter but the spirit was kind, and Eli knew the judgment against himself and his sons was just, so he accepted it, saying, "It is Jehovah; let Him do what seemeth Him good."

By the boy at his side Eli had been taught a lesson in fearless obedience to the truth. He had never corrected his sons, but this child, obeying what he knew to be right, had corrected Eli, although it must have been as hard for the boy to rebuke the teacher he loved as it was for Eli to correct his sons.

What became of Samuel? He "grew, and Jehovah was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of Jehovah."

All his mother's prayers for him were answered, and he became the last and the greatest judge of Israel and the first of the great prophets. She must have taught her other sons and daughters—she had several children after Samuel—that same lesson, that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

HOW HE WON

THE STORY OF DAVID AND GOLIATH

There was once a wonderful boy whose name was David. He lived with his father and seven brothers in a country where a man's wealth was counted by the number of sheep and cattle he possessed. David had charge of his father's sheep and often was away from home in the fields with them for days at a time. When he slept, his pillow was some smooth stones piled together, with his arms under him if he wanted it softer. The stars, and the moon when it shone, were his only light at night, and his blanket was a rough mantle of goat's hair which he wore over his shoulders in the daytime.

Some of the nights in that country are so cold and frosty that the sheep and shepherd have to lie close together to keep warm and to protect themselves from wild animals that prowl about at night. Fierce with hunger, these animals often attacked the sheep, and now and then a bold one would attack the shepherd. Wild, lawless men, more cruel than

the beasts, hid in gloomy places among the rocks of the narrow valleys. Often they stole the sheep and tried to kill the shepherd. So, you see, David's task was not the safe occupation the shepherd's is to-day.

Here among bleak rocks, in dark valleys or sunny pastures, the boy David went for days, and even months, with none to talk to unless some poor wounded lamb needed cuddling—just as I have seen a boy caress and talk to a frightened kitten that had crept to his arms for safety. You will naturally ask why such a difficult and frequently dangerous task was not given to one of David's elder brothers instead of to him. Just for the reason that he was the youngest, for in those days the best of everything went to the eldest of the family. The younger brothers acted as servants to the elder and did the most disagreeable work.

We know that David did not spend a moment envying his older brothers, or wishing that he had been born the eldest so that he could go to war and help the king fight the enemies of his country. Glory was not for David, and he knew it. His brothers could win victories in

battle, but he must stay out alone under the stars and care for his father's sheep. You may ask how we know that David didn't envy his brothers, or fret because they had so much more comfortable and lively a time than himself.

In the story as it was first told, we read that David "was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon." Now everyone knows that a lad with a face like that doesn't envy anyone and isn't fretful and discontented. Such thoughts would have shown in his face or been evident in his manner, and he surely wouldn't have been "goodly to look upon." David had found a Friend in the wilderness, a Friend who talked to him, and One to whom he often talked. Years afterward he wrote out these talks with his Friend, and we have them in a book which we call the Psalms. If you will read the Twenty-third Psalm you will have a word picture of how David cared for the sheep among the hills of Palestine. It is there he likens the task of the shepherd to God's caring for His people.

David, together with his seven brothers and other Hebrew lads, had been taught that

his people had been especially blessed by Jehovah, the God of Israel. He had learned how God had brought the Hebrews out from slavery in Egypt, and how the waters of the Red Sea had rolled back so that Israel could walk on dry ground as they crossed from Egypt into the desert. His father had told him how the people had been fed with manna in the wilderness. He had told him also how God had at last brought them to a beautiful land where they could have a king chosen from among their own people, live under their own Hebrew laws, and have homes of their own. Once a host of weak, frightened slaves, they had become a great and prosperous nation, feared by the countries around them; and all because Jehovah, their God, had been with them and directed them. Now we begin to see why David was never lonely or afraid, why he had strength to rescue the lambs from the lion and the bear that had tried to destroy them, and was able to save his countrymen from the fear of their enemies.

Among Israel's enemies were the Philistines, who were always provoking them to war. The

Hebrews were very much afraid of these Philistines. They must have forgotten what God had done for them in the past, or surely they would have called upon Him at once instead of putting their trust in a heavy suit of armor and a king who was as badly frightened as they were. The Philistines had grown very haughty and did a great deal of swaggering, as enemies always do when they see that people are afraid of them.

The armies of Israel stood on a mountain side, and across the valley on another mountain side were the Philistine warriors. These two armies were like two foolish and angry boys who stand scowling at each other, wanting to fight and not exactly daring to. Finally, a giant Philistine, named Goliath, strode out into the valley and said that he would fight any single man of Israel. If he won, the Hebrews were to become the Philistines' servants, but if the Hebrews won, the Philistines would submit to Israel. Then happened to Israel what happens to all of us when we get badly frightened—they forgot all about their God and His former care of them. That David did

differently we know, for in one of the Psalms he says, "Bless Jehovah, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

I know you will say that the Hebrews acted foolishly and that if you had been in their place you would not have done as they did. But stop a moment and think; do we ever, any of us, think clearly or do anything sensible when we are afraid?

All this time our shepherd boy, David, was caring for his sheep and wanting to know how the battle was being fought, and which side was winning. Then a message came to him from his father, to make himself ready and carry some food to his brothers who were encamped with Israel on the mountain side. Again we see David "goodly to look upon," for he was ready when his father sent the message. Not a word did he say about having to stop to do, or to finish, anything before he started on his errand. And he was prompt, for he rose early in the morning to begin his journey to the camp, and although we know that, boylike, he must have been glad to visit the stirring scenes taking place in the valley, he did not

forget his sheep, for he left them in charge of a keeper. When he reached the army he first greeted his brothers and delivered his message. Even the excitement about him and his own interest in the expected battle did not make him forget what he had come for; he attended to that first. You see, David, when he had an object in view, went straight toward it, and when he aimed at anything he meant to hit it.

Goliath strutted back and forth before Israel, calling them to come out and fight him. He sneered at them because they were afraid, and said that he defied not only one man, but the whole army of Israel.

David was not at all frightened, for, lying out under the stars on his stony pillow, he had heard God whisper in his heart, "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." And he well knew that the bluster and bragging of a bully such as Goliath merely meant weakness.

But the poor trembling Hebrews fled, telling David that the man who could slay this giant would be greatly honored by the Hebrew king, Saul. David's reply must have astonished them

all, for it was, "What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

David felt that it was a shame for his countrymen to forget God and fear man, even if that man were a giant covered with a coat of mail and heavy brass armor, a giant who shook his great spear as he walked toward Israel, with a servant going before him carrying his huge shield. But our shepherd boy had on armor that no one saw. His shield was faith in God.

David's eldest brother was present and was very angry at what he considered his young brother's impertinent curiosity. He said some very hard and unkind things to David. Here again our hero goes straight to his mark and does not miss his aim. His purpose was to learn how the trouble between Israel and the Philistines was to be settled, and who was to meet Goliath. He had no time to get angry and quarrel with his brother when more important matters were to be decided.

King Saul sent for David when he heard how bravely the lad had spoken. No doubt he was much relieved when he thought that an experienced Hebrew warrior was willing to fight this terrible Goliath. Then picture his surprise when the youthful David, with erect, slight figure and fair face, was shown into his tent! David exclaimed at once, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine."

The surprised king replied, "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth."

Then our shepherd boy said that God had delivered him and his sheep from the paws of a lion and a bear, and that the same God was certainly able to overcome the Philistine and save Israel. I don't suppose that David's memory was a bit better than Saul's or that of the rest of the Hebrew army. But Saul and his men were filled with fear, and David was strong in faith. Their memories were at work telling them how dangerous their enemies were and how much harm they had done Israel,

DAVID RESCUING THE LAMB

while David's memory rested in the thought of the power of God and how he had never failed to deliver Israel from her enemies.

Saul admired David's courage, but evidently thought that the lad did not realize the danger, for he armed the youth with his bulky armor. Some of you who have read the tales of chivalry in the Middle Ages know how the knights rode about clad in heavy armor. If any one of them was unhorsed, his enemy could easily kill him, because his armor was so bulky and heavy that it was almost impossible for the knight to move about in it. David felt this way about Saul's armor. He was not used to it and therefore it hindered him, so he put off the armor, saying, "I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them."

Saul did not know then what every school boy knows now, that unseen forces are the most powerful. And we should not be surprised at his thinking that David's faith, which Saul could neither see nor feel, was not as powerful as his fine suit of armor. How did David go to meet Goliath? He took his staff, slung his shepherd's bag across his shoulders after putting

in it five smooth stones, and carried his sling in his hand. When Goliath and his shield-bearer advanced to meet David, I am sure both armies held their breath with suspense. The Hebrews looking at the mighty giant marching toward the youthful unarmed figure of David must have gained new courage, for courage and faith are contagious, as well as fear and doubt. David's example and his words had put new energy into his people, and could you and I have seen them, we should have been surprised at the change in them, no longer cowering before the threats of the Philistines, but erect with the hope of victory.

As for the foolish Philistines, they were probably laughing in their sleeves at the sight and wondering if Israel and David had lost all their good sense. This is done to-day by all people who cannot understand spiritual things. Such people say that because a thing can't be seen, heard, tasted, touched, or smelled, it does not exist. But we shall see who was in the right: the Philistines trusting in that which they saw, or the lad who had faith in the unseen God.

Goliath was very angry when he saw David coming toward him, and cursed him, saying, "Am I a dog, that thou comest to meet me with staves? . . . . Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the birds of the heavens, and to the beasts of the field."

Of course we know by this time that these words did not disturb David or make him wish that he had not offered to battle against the giant. Instead, he must have looked steadily at Goliath, for to have a good aim a lad must look at his mark and have a steady arm and clear sight. Had his faith weakened and fear taken its place, the stones in his bag and the sling in his hand would have been useless. An arm trembling with fright or doubt cannot send a stone, or anything else, straight toward its mark. David answered the savage Philistine in words that will live forever, so full are they of faith in "our Father," God.

"Thou comest to meet me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a javelin: but I come to thee in the name of Jehovah of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou has defied. This day will Jehovah deliver thee

into my hand . . . . that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that Jehovah saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is Jehovah's, and He will give you into our hand."

You have seen from the beginning that this was a very unequal contest; perhaps you have sympathized with Israel, because you believed they were physically weaker than their enemies. Maybe you who are older, and have learned that a boy's head is worth more than his fist when he does some thinking, have felt ashamed of the ignorance of the Philistines, who tried to fight God, Spirit, with sword and spear. Whichever way you may have thought, the battle was Jehovah's, as David said, and He did deliver Goliath into the hands of the shepherd boy.

As the giant advanced swaggering and cursing, trusting in his immense size and the strength of his armor, David began to run toward the Philistine. Drawing a stone from his bag as he ran, he put it in his sling and took aim at Goliath. As David's faith and

courage were sure, so was his aim, and the stone sank into the giant's forehead. The mighty Philistine fell to the ground face downward. In those days it was customary to cut off the head of a fallen enemy. This David did, using the giant's own sword. Then he held up the head of Goliath before Israel, proclaiming his victory.

When the Philistines saw that they were defeated, they fled, leaving their tents and treasures in the hands of Israel. The overjoyed Hebrews sang praises to their youthful hero, who had delivered them out of the hand of their enemies. While they were praising him, David, we know, must have thanked God for the victory—as always he had done and continued to do throughout his life when he was saved from trouble or from danger. Some of these thanksgiving songs of David's are written in the Psalms. If you will read them you will come to love the shepherd lad who found God "a very present help in trouble." David learned to love and to have faith in the unseen Power who guided him in the wilderness with his sheep and taught him the lessons which

made him afterward the well-beloved king of Israel. As you know, the name "David" means "beloved."

THE BOOMERANG

SOLOMON AND THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

What fun it is to travel and see strange sights and queer people! There is so much bustle and stir at the station—engines puffing, bells ringing, men calling trains, while people scramble up the steep steps of the cars, holding fast to tickets which tell the conductor how far they are to go. Watching from car windows it surely seems not we, but the telegraph poles, that are moving so rapidly down the track. We seem to be sitting still while fences hurry by in their effort to keep step with the poles. Even the trees appear to be running a race; those in the distance saunter along in a very dignified manner, while those nearer us give a toss to their branches as they rush past with a how-do-you-do and good-by.

Suppose we take a journey today. But it will not be by train, for we are going to fly. Does that strike you as being odd? Well, what will you say when I tell you that we are going to sit still in our chairs at home and at the same time go on a long journey?

"That is impossible," some of you are saying. "No one can be traveling while staying at home."

We can easily do it, for our flight is to be only a flight of the imagination, and our journey is to carry us not over miles of land, but over many years of time. You boys and girls who have studied history will best enjoy the journey, but when we arrive at our destination even the little tots will like it.

Now we are off. Take a good look at everything before we start, and leave the comfortable things of to-day and go back into the past. We shall pass the years in which Washington and his brave soldiers fought for America's independence, and go beyond the time when three tiny ships landed Columbus and his men on the shores of San Salvador. We shall see the charter of England's freedom hidden in the old oak. And as we pass by the years we shall leave behind us thousands of children marching across Europe in their crusade to rescue the Holy Sepulcher from heathen hands. Rome will burn to ashes, Christianity will not have been born, Europe will be only a bleak wilderness

at the time we arrive at our journey's end; for we are going, not three thousand miles, but three thousand years back in time. It is best not to make too many stops along the way, for our errand is important and we wish to be in time to see the queen of Sheba enter Jerusalem when she makes her visit to King Solomon of Israel. We have not been invited and so cannot join in the festivities, but we can look on, and after a three thousand years' flight I am sure we shall all be content to rest and watch the gay city entertain its royal guest.

You will remember Jacob and his lonely journey across the wilderness, and the promise God made him there that he should become the father of a great people. This promise had been fulfilled when our story opens, and Israel had become a powerful nation. Solomon, her king, was very wise—so wise and wealthy that the queen of Sheba had left her country far in the south to visit him. His fame had spread abroad to all countries, and the queen, not able to believe all that she had heard about him, determined to find out for herself whether the reports were true.

We have arrived just in the nick of time. We find Jerusalem all excitement, expectantly awaiting the coming of the queen.

"How new everything looks!" some little girl is saying.

Yes, it does. It is really an old, old city, but Solomon, the son of David, has made so many improvements that to us it seems new. The streets lately paved with black stone, the strong wall with its great towers, the wonderful golden temple, and Solomon's magnificent palace have all been built by him.

"And, oh, there is a summer garden outside the walls of the city!" cries a small boy delightedly.

It may look like a summer garden to you, and I will admit that the description of Paradise—the name Solomon gave his garden—is very much like a description of our modern amusement parks. But there is a difference. Our gardens are for everybody, while Solomon's were only for himself and his nobles and royal guests. Later we shall stop at the garden and see all its attractions, but now we must hurry up the steep slopes to the city gates if we are

to be there when the queen and her royal train enter.

It was Jerusalem's most prosperous era, and she gloried in it. Was not Solomon, her king, the wisest of all men? So far no one had been able to ask him a question that he could not answer. Stop for a moment and glance at the stately temple. You may have to shield your eyes, for its golden beauty dazzles in the sunshine. To this day no more costly or magnificent temple or church has ever been built. Seven years it was in building, and when it was dedicated so many sheep and oxen were sacrificed that blood ran in streams down the temple courts. While we are looking at the temple let us examine the "molten sea" in one of the temple courts. This is a massive bowl of copper holding thousands of gallons of water. Here the priests washed their hands and feet before killing the animals to be burned on the altar. You wonder why the priests washed before, instead of after, sacrificing? Perhaps you think, as I thought for many years, the cleaner way would have been to wash after the slaughter was over. But we must remember

that the people of olden times often talked in symbols; that is, what they did had as much meaning as though they had spoken.

Only in a condition of holiness—that is, of purity—would anything offered to God be acceptable to Him. For this reason when the priests sacrificed—that is, made Him an offering—they first cleansed themselves. The "molten sea" is a mammoth bowl, but the twelve great copper oxen on whose backs the "sea" rests are well able to hold it.

Do you wish to mount the steps of the brazen altar? It is large, and the steps high, but as they are arranged in three tiers like terraces, we can stop at each landing. At the top is the blazing square where the animals are burned. There are channels in which the blood of the victims is carried away from the altar. But, even at that, the smell of burning flesh and scorching blood is not pleasant, and we shall hurry on until we reach the city streets so thronged with people. Old and young, big and little, are scurrying along to reach the city walls in time to see the queen as she passes through the gates to Solomon's palace. We shall follow

the crowd and halt with them, for they will know best where we can see most.

There they come, the queen and her long train of camels, servants, slaves, and soldiers. Those patient camels plod along slowly, chewing their cuds as they enter the gates. They have crossed a desert carrying on their backs great packs of costly spices and precious jewels to be given to King Solomon. They have come from a long distance and brought with them vats of water and stores of food, for when people traveled in those days they had to carry everything they needed with them. Day after day and night after night the queen and her train have been traveling. There have been days when all of them lay flat on the sands of the desert to be safe as a sand storm swept over them. The peril of roving bands of robbers, and wild animals snarling about the fires at night, the queen has braved in order to greet the wisest of all men, King Solomon of Israel. The train of camels as it passes through the gates leaves behind it sweet-smelling odors. It is because the enormous packs the camels carry are filled with spices, the rich, sweet-smelling

plants and perfumes of the Orient. The Bible says: "There came no more such abundance of spices as these which the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon."

We will go with the queen and her train as they move toward the palace. Let us slip inside and watch as Solomon waits for his royal visitor. There he sits on his gorgeous ivory and gold throne. To us it looks like a mammoth chair at the head of a flight of steps of ivory and gold. The king's arms are outstretched upon the arms of his wonderful throne. The arms of this throne rest upon twelve ivory and gold lions seated upon the steps. David, his father, was of the tribe of Judah, and these lions represent "the lion of the tribe of Judah."

At last the queen and her train of servants and soldiers enter and sweep down the aisles of the immense audience hall. It is called "The house of the forest of Lebanon" because of the forty-five massive cedar pillars from Lebanon which decorate it. The blare of horns and the clash of cymbals will not let us hear the greeting Solomon gives the queen. But that it was kindly we know because the queen begins at

once to offer him her priceless gifts. Diamonds, rubies, and pearls she must have brought him by the bushel, as we are told there was no counting them for their number. She brought him rare spices — that is, oils, ointment, and perfumes — such as his kingdom, rich as it was, had never seen. Of gold she gave him one hundred and twenty talents, a sum equal to about four million of our dollars.

Then followed days of luxurious entertainment. The king spared neither money nor time to make the queen's visit one to be remembered. Together they must have visited his summer home. Paradise he called it. In this paradise were great gardens filled with plants, trees, and flowers brought from many lands. There were pools of water in abundance, and vineyards. Men and women singers delighted his visitors, and dancing girls wound in and out amongst the trees and shrubbery. Deer drank by the pools of water. In fact, everything to please the fancy of his guests abounded in this garden.

The chariots of the queen and Solomon must have moved side by side as they went

from Jerusalem to his paradise at Etham. The queen was all astonishment as Solomon in his glistening white garments mounted his chariot of cedar and gold. The fiery Egyptian horses were driven by a handsome youth clad in expensive Tyrian purple, with his long black hair freshly sprinkled with powdered gold. None but young men, the tallest and handsomest of Israel, were allowed to be Solomon's bodyguard, and when they went with him to Paradise they were obliged to wear expensive Tyrian purple and had daily to dust their hair with powdered gold.

The queen watched in silent amazement as Solomon passed from the judgment hall to the temple between two lines of soldiers each carrying a shield of gold.

"Golden shields!" says some boy. "Of what use could they be? Gold is too soft a metal to be used for shields."

They were not for use, only for show, and to add to the glory of Solomon as he went from palace to temple. You remember he only had a few hundred made, not nearly enough to fit out an army.

SOLOMON GREETING THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

From their visit to the temple let us go to the hall where the king's table is ready for his guests and his household. It will not be a table like ours. Neither will they sit down to it, for Orientals recline while they eat, with their heads turned towards the low table. We cannot stop to sample all of the dishes, for we have been told by the Bible that in one day only, the king and his household ate three hundred bushels of fine flour, six hundred bushels of meal, ten fat oxen, and twenty of the leaner field oxen, one hundred sheep, besides plenty of wild game such as fowl and deer, and other delicacies.

"It seems as though they ate mostly meat," says some little girl.

Yes, the people of long ago had many fancy ways of serving meats. They were expensive and foolish, but the kings and nobles of those days enjoyed wasting both food and money while the poorer people went hungry.

Let us follow the king and queen as they visit the royal stables where Solomon has his forty thousand stalls of horses and shelters his thousand and four hundred chariots. Every

boy and girl will enjoy looking at these beautiful Egyptian steeds. How restless and impatient they are, confined in their stalls! Their glossy coats and long manes are daily groomed by men appointed for that special purpose. These horses cost too much to be neglected. Solomon loved his horses, but did not love the stranger that was within his gates.

Why do I say that? Because when he built his temple he had made slaves of the foreigners dwelling in Jerusalem, compelling them to cut stone and hew wood for it. In order that their cries and groans should not disturb the ears of the dwellers in the city, these enslaved Caananites were forced to work outside the walls of Jerusalem. They were compelled to finish every stone, beam, and pillar used in building before it was brought inside the city walls, and this is the reason "there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building."

"And why," some boy asks, "did Solomon have horses and chariots when a king of Israel was forbidden to multiply horses, and was told not to deal with Egypt?"

Yes, and he was also told that he should not multiply silver and gold. But in spite of that, Solomon had even the dishes for his table made of gold; and as for silver, he made it so common that it was of no more value than the stones of the street.

"Did n't Solomon pray for wisdom?" inquires a little girl.

"Yes, and he asked God to punish wickedness and to reward righteousness," replies another child.

"He said more than that," a boy adds, "he asked God to condemn the wicked and to bring his way upon his own head."

You are right, children. Solomon prayed for wisdom which he did not use for good. He asked to be given the power to "discern between good and evil," and then he chose to do evil. No doubt some of you will remember that the Bible says,

"Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek Jehovah!"

"I don't think Solomon really trusted in God as much as he did in his chariots," all of you are saying.

He surely did not, and I am afraid he had already forgotten his father, David, who slew the powerful giant, Goliath, with only a small stone in a sling, and who said, "Jehovah saveth not with sword and spear." God is unchanging and could have saved Israel and Solomon as easily as he had saved David. Because he is unchanging we can safely trust God at all times. Remember, God has said through the mouth of one of his prophets, "For I, Jehovah, change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed."

But let us go back in our story and listen to the queen of Sheba as she tests Solomon with hard questions. He has a ready answer for all of them; nothing that she can ask is too hard for him. And why should it be? He who was able to write three thousand proverbs and one thousand and five songs, and had built costly temples and palaces, who had studied the habits of plants, fishes, birds, and beasts, and who had built a navy and encouraged learning, certainly

could answer any question that a person could ask. But there are some questions the smallest tot among you could ask him which he could not answer.

Solomon, why did you pray for good and then do evil? Why did you say Jehovah was the only God in earth or in heaven and then erect temples to Moloch and Chemosh, the horrible firegods of the heathen? And why did you ask to keep all Jehovah's laws and precepts and immediately begin to break every one of them?

What do you think he would have answered to these questions?

"Nothing," say some of you, and I think myself that silence would have been the best answer.

But the queen was satisfied. All that she desired had been given her. Solomon's glory and his magnificence had so awed her that, as the Bible expresses it, "there was no more spirit in her," and she said to the king: "Thy wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame which I heard."

* * * *

The sun's rays fall upon glistening gold and polished ivory. In some corners of the narrow

streets the night shadows are already gathering when the queen of Sheba and her train again pass through Jerusalem's gates and slowly wind down the steep slopes leading to the valley. The camel boys and servants are chanting the weird songs of the desert as they go. As she rides away the queen turns to cast a last look at the splendor of Jerusalem, and as she does so breathes a prayer; it is for Solomon.

"Happy are thy men, happy . . . . thy servants, that stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be Jehovah thy God, who delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel . . . . to do justice and righteousness."

We turn back to the city as darkness hides the queen and her train from view. Life and love seem to have gone with her. Instead of songs of joy there come to our ears the curses and cries of a suffering people, the slaves that were doing Solomon's hard labor. Their voices in the night are crying for relief from their misery.

"Will they get it?" you ask.

Think for a moment. Don't you remember that when Solomon dedicated his wonderful temple he asked God to bless the strangers dwelling among Israel, and also to hear them when they cried unto Jehovah to avenge their wrongs?

Was it the night the queen turned again and went to her own country that Solomon remembered what she had said to him about being made a king to do righteousness, and heard again the voice of Jehovah, this time not in commendation?

"Jehovah was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned away from Jehovah, the God of Israel . . . . wherefore Jehovah said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes . . . . I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant."

Poor king! Poor unhappy wise man! His wisdom became to him a torment. He tells us so himself, saying, "In much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."

Wisdom misused, as Solomon misused his, does become a torment, as he said. You have read of the curious weapon called a boomerang thrown by the Australian natives. If not hurled aright it can do the thrower injury, as it always returns to the hand that hurls it. So everything we have and do not use aright comes back to us and does us harm.

Solomon prayed for wisdom, received it, and did not use it rightly. His wisdom, which should have been a blessing, became a curse to him and to his country. During his lifetime Israel was enriched, but when his son succeeded him the glory of the kingdom faded and it became two petty principalities warring always with each other and with surrounding nations.

Solomon the wise saw, before he died, the results of his cruelty and extravagance. The people were already rebelling against the unjust taxes he imposed upon them and refusing to be his slaves. Do you wonder that, in the bitterness of his disappointment at having ruined instead of establishing Israel, he said, "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun;

and, behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind."

* * * *

Let us not be too severe upon the king. It is wise to remember that we, too, may have gifts, advantages, and opportunities that we are not using rightly. Perhaps we have prayed for the desire of our hearts as Solomon prayed for his wisdom, and been as ignorant as he was in the use of it. But of one thing we can be certain: Whatever we do not handle aright, no matter what it may be, is sure to return to us, or, as Ezekiel the prophet declares, "Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, I will even bring it upon his own head."

THE ONLY ONE

THE FLIGHT OF ELIJAH

If you have ever seen a military parade—soldiers marching with flags flying and drums beating—and have listened to the stirring strains of music played by the bands as they passed—the people waving and shouting at them from the house windows, roofs, and street curbs—you will feel the spirit of this story. It is a stirring one, for our hero Elijah was a stirring character.

Who was Elijah? He was a prophet. "Oh, I know what a prophet is," I hear some of you say. "He is a person who tells about things before they happen." In that sense our weather man who tells us on Wednesday what the weather is going to be on Thursday, or next week, is a prophet. Like many other words, "prophet" has been wrongly used and now has come to mean something it did not mean at first. Originally the word meant one who is inspired, or, using it in its present sense, the word "prophet" means one who speaks for another. And this is what Elijah did. He

spoke for God. In fact, the name Elijah means "Jehovah is God."

Were you ever startled, when you thought you were alone, by some one suddenly speaking to you or coming quietly behind you and touching you? Do you remember how you gave a start of surprise or perhaps cried out in alarm? So it was with Elijah. He comes so suddenly and vigorously into the Bible story that we have to pause a minute to get used to him. And it is the same all the way through. He is supposed to be far away, when, instantly, he stands before you. No story of a magician mysteriously appearing and disappearing is more fascinating than the story of Elijah. But so many things happened in his life that I can tell you of only one of them.

He was very severe and stern, as most people are who live alone and do not know others well enough to understand them or to have charity for them. Living in the desert as he did, wandering about without any fixed home, eating or not as it happened, and wearing the coarsest clothing, he could not understand why others were miserable because they did not have

everything they wanted. So the people who loved pleasure, and Elijah, who thought God's service meant having little or no pleasure, hated each other as only people can hate who look at each other's faults instead of trying to find out each other's virtues.

Elijah was fearless, honest, and determined, and felt that if the Israelites did not want to serve their God they must be forced to do so. Most of the people of Israel had forgotten about Jehovah and had adopted the gods of the people among whom they lived. These gods were harsh and cruel, often demanding, so the people thought, that they should sacrifice their sons and daughters upon altars dedicated to these brutal gods.

You may wonder why parents who loved their children should do such a dreadful thing as to burn them on the altar of any god, even though the god did demand it. But fear always makes men cruel and merciless, and never lets them stop to reason about anything. The god these people worshiped was the god of fear, as you may see for yourselves if you read all the Bible says about him.

The blighting, withering heat of the sun which frequently killed their crops, their cattle, and sometimes themselves, the worshipers of Baal thought was the anger of their god. So to coax him into good humor they offered upon his altars the best they had, which was their children. These people had so many images of their gods it was hard to keep track of them. Tree trunks, bulls, serpents, turtles, and many other natural objects they believed to be sacred. In their pockets, strung around their necks, in the temples, and by the roadside were idols in great number. To keep their gods in good humor was a serious task and really made them uneasy all the time wondering if their god was going to send them good or evil.

You know how you feel when you are not sure of anything. Suppose you never knew when you went to school whether you would find it closed or open. How much time would you spend studying lessons that you might never have a chance to recite? So it was with these people of long ago—not knowing what their god was going to do, they ceased to care what he did. But of one thing they were sure—they

knew what a good time meant and they were going to have it.

Do you wonder Elijah spoke such harsh words to King Ahab? Both of them were Israelites. Their God was Jehovah, who was very different from the cruel Baal. Elijah's father had taught him that Jehovah was invisible but that he was more powerful than the heathen gods, because real power is always unseen.

You don't believe it? Tell me which gives the more powerful heat, the steam you do not see in your radiator or the few logs or coals which lie in your grate?

Ahab, the Hebrew king, had married a heathen wife, and he and all Israel had gone over to the worship of Baal's many images, although every Israelite had been taught that the worship of idols was hateful to Jehovah. So great was Jehovah it was impossible to make an image big enough to represent Him.

Justice is Thy throne, righteousness is Thy law, truth is Thy word. Elijah had heard this said of Jehovah ever since he had first squatted on his heels or sat cross-legged on the ground with other little lads as they gathered around

their teacher, listening as he read or talked to them. They had no books to study from, but had to learn by heart and be able to repeat exactly what the teacher taught them. They had to pay close attention and make good use of their ears, you see. Every child in Israel knew that Jehovah was unchangeable. That is why they could always trust in Him. Moses had told them what Jehovah's laws were. All they had to do was to obey them. Jehovah was very different from Baal, whose will might be one thing one day and something quite different the next.

"That made it easy for Israel," you say. "If they knew what to do to keep out of trouble, of course they never had any."

Wait before you say that. They did just as many people do to-day—walked right into the trouble they knew how to avoid, and this was why Elijah was angry with them. But he *was* severe. Evil never tempted him and he could not understand why it should tempt others. If he had loved the people a little more perhaps he would have understood them better. You remember the New Testament

says, "He that hateth his brother is in the darkness . . . and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes." So our poor, fearless, upright Elijah, trying earnestly to lead his people back to the worship of Jehovah, used very harsh measures with them, and then as now harsh measures failed.

Elijah said to King Ahab, "As Jehovah, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." And he knew when he said that what suffering it would bring to Israel — it meant famine. How different are the words of Jesus, who says of God, "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." Elijah thought he was doing right; he believed that it was no more than these people deserved, to starve and die if they would not serve God. You girls and boys who have been taught that even the wild animals are much more easily tamed when treated kindly, will wonder that Elijah did not know better than to act as he did. "Why," you will say, "couldn't he

ELIJAH THREATENING AHAB

see he was only making the people more angry and more afraid?"

Stop and think again for a moment. Did you never say, when someone insisted on doing something wrong or foolish, "Let him go; serves him right; I don't care if he does get hurt."

Elijah, courageous himself, despised the weakness and timidity of Ahab. He forgot that being honest and doing the best that he knew how to do were what had made him fearless, while Ahab, selfish, cruel, and dishonest, always had something to run away from and of course was always afraid. Elijah never allowed himself to be influenced by evil things or evil persons. He could not understand how anyone, especially a king, could be like a piece of putty, made into any shape—that is, made to do any evil thing suggested by some one else. Elijah forgot that he trusted in the God of Israel, who was his strength, but that Ahab, following the cruel Baal, could not be strong because he had nothing to lean on. But Elijah did not see this, and so he was harsh.

For three years and a half no rain fell. The people, the crops, and the cattle suffered

dreadfully, and Ahab began to fear that even the horses and mules would die. Suddenly Elijah appeared before him, saying that the king and the people had forsaken Jehovah and thrown down His altars. He knew that in times of trouble people usually turned toward God, so he came now and asked the Israelites if they were ready to rebuild Jehovah's altars. I think they must have hesitated, for he said, "How long go ye limping between the two sides? if Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." The people did not answer him. How could they? Jehovah and his kindness they had forgotten, and of Baal they were afraid.

I shall give these people a chance, thought Elijah. The four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal may build an altar on Mount Carmel, and I will build one, for "I, even I only, am left" a prophet of Jehovah.

The Israelites and the prophets of Baal were soon building their altars and getting the sacrifice—a bullock—ready. Have you ever seen an Indian war dance? If you have, you can form some idea of how Baal's prophets danced and shrieked and cut themselves with sharp

stones and knives as they called upon Baal to answer them. All day long these poor creatures cried to their god and he did not answer. Elijah made some taunting remarks to them about their god's silence. I am sorry he did so, for his words did not help anyone. He seemed to be adding all the time to the hatred he was trying to cure.

Elijah had made a bargain with Israel and the prophets of Baal. His bargain was that the god who answered by fire and consumed the sacrifice was to be acknowledged the true God.

When evening came, and the tall rocks were casting long shadows on the ground, Baal's prophets were worn out with their useless screaming and calling upon him. Elijah then stepped to the altar he had built with twelve stones, each stone meaning one of the twelve tribes of Israel, and ordered that it be drenched with water. Is he crazy, they thought. Is it possible he expects to be answered with fire? Why, that altar as well as every bit of wood on it is dripping wet! But Elijah was wiser than all of them, and understood invisible forces that these weak and ignorant people never dreamed of.

He called upon Jehovah, and the fire fell and "licked up," as the Bible tells us, the wood, the bullock, the stones, and even the dust around the altar. The people were now thoroughly frightened, for we are told that "when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, 'Jehovah, he is God; Jehovah, he is God.'"

But hardly had they gone down the mountain side before they were again worshiping Baal. They had answered in fear, and nothing done in fear lasts. It is love that is the fulfilling of the law, and this Elijah had yet to learn.

Elijah in his zeal had forgotten the commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain," and had made his people and the heathen priests see God as a destroying power—that same God of whom David had sung in his songs as being full of mercy and loving-kindness. Of course God could not be both a God of love and a God of vengeance; this also Elijah learned when he was alone on Mount Horeb. Even the poor, ignorant prophets of Baal, after he had conquered them, he took down to the brook Kishon and slew. Very

different, was it not, from the way Elisha treated the Syrian host he made captive?

Jezebel, the wicked queen and wife of Ahab, as soon as she learned of Elijah's victory, sent a messenger telling him that just as he had treated Baal's prophets so should she treat him.

He was greatly discouraged. Why, he thought, when I have shown my people that Jehovah is stronger than Baal, and my prayers have given them the needed rain, do they now seek my life?

In order to escape Jezebel's anger he traveled forty days' journey to "Horeb the mount of God," and lodged there in a cave. He knew there must be something wrong for he was not getting good results. In order to save his people and to serve Jehovah he had endangered his life. Instead of feeling grateful the people evidently were more than ever afraid of him, and thought with Jezebel that he was an enemy instead of a friend of Israel.

What was the reason? Elijah began to think the fault might not all have been Israel's. Perhaps he had not done exactly right himself. He was so sincere in his love for Jehovah that he

was ready to acknowledge his own mistakes. Besides, there was something encouraging in the fact that no one, not even Jezebel, could prevent him from correcting his own faults.

Safe from the hatred of the queen, and rested from his journey, he heard God's voice asking him, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" And very bitterly he replied, "I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."

He was told to hide no longer in the cave, but to go out and stand "upon the mount before Jehovah." Then there came a violent wind, crushing the rocks and tearing the mountains; and after that an earthquake that destroyed even more than the wind, and finally a fire that devoured all in its path. But Elijah did not see God in any of these things—wind, earthquake, fire—and yet he had expected other people to see God in violence!

Then what do you think he did? He covered his face. Why? Because there came to him

"a still small voice," and God was in this quietness.

Do you not recall some time when the fall of a leaf, or the rattle of a shutter, or even your own thoughts made you uneasy, because in the stillness you remembered mistakes you had made or a wrong you had done? It is at such times that the "still small voice" sounds louder than any noisy faultfinding ever does.

Elijah was fast learning, when he sat down to think, that if he could hear God better in quietness, other people also could hear him better. What had he done? He had been harsh and unmerciful. Now he knew this was not the way to serve God. He had made the people fear more instead of less, and had killed the helpless prophets of Baal.

Again the voice came to him, saying, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" And again Elijah made the same reply, that Israel had broken down Jehovah's altars and that he was *the only one* left who trusted in Jehovah.

Poor Elijah! Like discouraged people to-day who think they are the only ones interested in a good work, and if it were not for them the

work could not go on, he felt that it was too hard for him alone. Imagine his surprise when the voice told him that there were yet seven thousand in Israel who had not followed Baal and were still worshiping Jehovah. Where had his eyes been that he had not seen these seven thousand still faithful to Jehovah? Perhaps each one of them, as well as Elijah, was thinking that only he was faithful to Jehovah's law and performing God's work as it should be done.

Elijah's eyes were where every discouraged person's eyes are, on himself with a good deal of self-pity. But he was beginning to see how alike all people are, and how even the most earnest and sincere can make serious mistakes. This made him more kindly and able to see why other people acted as they did. Light was coming to him—the light that one of the apostles of Jesus said if men would walk in, they should have "fellowship one with another."

This fellowship Elijah was beginning to feel when the voice told him that not only were there others in Israel beside himself who worshiped Jehovah, but that there was also a prophet ready to take his place. Comforted and

strengthened, he came down from the mount and anointed Elisha, whom he had been told to anoint "to be prophet in thy room."

In the succeeding years, while these two worked together, I am sure that Elijah often told the younger prophet what he had learned that night alone on Horeb, for Elisha was seldom stern or harsh, but instead was gentle and kind. Elijah wanted his people to understand that Jehovah punished evil; Elisha was busy showing them that God rewarded good.

Earthquake, fire, whirlwind, fiery chariots, fierce rebukes, and awful vengeance surrounded Elijah. He was righteous, moral, true, and fearless, but he had to learn "the one thing needful"—that the God who is love can be served only by loving.

WHAT HAVE YOU IN THE HOUSE?

THE POT OF OIL

She was very poor, and worse still, she was in debt. All she had was her two sons, and her creditor had told her that unless she paid her debts he would take her boys away from her and make bondmen of them. But she had nothing. What should she do in order to pay the money to her creditor and save her sons? Like all mothers, she did not want to lose her children. It was hard, bitterly hard, to have them leave her; but, what would make it worse, they were going away as bondmen and probably would not be treated kindly and would be unhappy.

The poor mother was a Hebrew, and the laws of her country forbade one Hebrew making a bondservant of another. So if her creditor were a Hebrew he would be acting against the laws of his country in making bondservants of her sons, and she knew that people who break laws of kindness—such as this law was intended to be—were not likely to be careful of their

bondmen. If her creditor were a rich foreigner, who knew nothing of Israel or of Israel's laws, the boys might not only be neglected or abused, but they would be taught to worship idols of wood or clay as gods, and never be taught the power of Jehovah, the God of Israel. She was a widow. Her husband had been a student, perhaps a teacher in one of the schools of the prophets. He had loved Jehovah and had lived in such a manner that the people respected and had confidence in him. What a pity that two boys brought up as his sons had been, should be sold for debt and really made slaves!

Would you like to know what these schools of the prophets were, and what it meant to be one of the "sons of the prophets"? If you have read the story of Samuel, you know he became a great prophet and founded schools where children could be taught about Jehovah and His laws. These schools were something like our theological seminaries where pupils study for the ministry. The word "son" in Hebrew meant any kind of relationship or likeness. For instance, "a son of Belial" was not a son of a person so named, but meant a worthless,

good-for-nothing fellow, as "Belial" means uselessness, worthlessness. So a "son" of the prophets was a member of the school or order of the prophets, as your father, perhaps, is a member of a masonic order.

This sad mother about to lose her two children and wondering what she could do to save them, finally thought of Elisha, the prophet. She had been taught the sacred books of the law, for girls as well as boys learned Israel's history, and how Jehovah had always cared for His people. She remembered a song that King David used to sing and that he had set to music so that it could be sung by the temple choruses. It was such a comforting song, and often at night she with her husband and the boys had used it for their evening prayer. One of the verses kept coming over and over again into her mind, "Who will show us any good?" until she thought, Jehovah is our God and Elisha is His prophet; Elisha knew my husband and he will show me if there is any good.

The two boys also were very anxious. They were not afraid of the work they would have to do as bondmen, for every Jewish boy was taught

to work so that he could care for himself and help his parents if they needed it. No, it was not the work; but they were free born, and slavery was hateful to every son and daughter of Israel. Besides, their mother needed them, and they knew their father had expected them always to care for her. Sold for debt and taken from her, how could they be any help to her?

It was a sorrowful supper mother and sons ate together that last evening. Big boys as they were, when they rose to repeat the psalm of David for their evening prayer, they could not be blamed if their voices choked as they uttered the words, "Many there are that say, who will show us any good?" But a tired, healthy boy falls asleep easily, and these two lads speedily forgot their dread of to-morrow.

With the mother it was different. She was determined she would not lose her children. Elisha was not far away, and there was a whole night between to-day and to-morrow. Perhaps in that time something could be done to save her boys. She left them sleeping and hurried to Elisha, who always was kind and usually found ways of helping people who called upon

him. Elisha listened. He was a busy man, but it was God's business, not his own, that he was interested in, and he knew that God's business was helping people, especially the "widow and the fatherless."

"What shall I do for thee?" had been the cheery greeting of Elisha to her, and as soon as she had finished her story he asked her, "What hast thou in the house?"

Some of you boys and girls are thinking that a very foolish question to ask when the widow had just told him she had nothing. But Elisha had not sympathized with and helped people for years without learning the best way to help them. He knew this mother had made herself so miserable for fear she would have to part with her two sons that she could think of nothing else; that probably in her grief she had forgotten she had some things which she could use to relieve her trouble.

She must have something. The widow of one of "the sons of the prophets," and one who was as highly esteemed as her husband had been, surely could not have left his family without anything. Elisha was the best kind of a friend,

for he knew the only good way to help others was to show them how to help themselves. So instead of saying, "What can I give you?" he said, "What hast thou in the house?"

Her heart must have grown lighter as she told her story, and she was able to remember one good thing she had in her house, for she answered Elisha's question with the words, "Thy handmaid hath not anything in the house, save a pot of oil."

Just think of it, nothing but oil and an abundance of it! Oil was not only a necessity but one of the greatest luxuries of her country and of the people around her.

"She had only a pot of it," you may say, "and that is not much."

Yes, but the word translated "pot" means in the Hebrew a great many sizes of dishes for liquids. It may mean a cask, a keg, a barrel, or even a vat. We know that the widow must have had a large quantity or Elisha would not have given her the advice which he did.

Oil had many uses among these oriental people of whom the Hebrews were a part. They cooked with it; they used it for their bath and

toilet. It was used for medicine and at funerals, in their religious services and daily sacrifices. Kings, priests, prophets, were anointed with it. Even in war it served a purpose, as leather and metal shields were rubbed and polished with it, and wounds and bruises were washed in it. Hosts anointed with oil the heads of guests who were especially honored. On hot days people rubbed themselves with it to make them cool, and, if they were cold, an oil rub made them warm.

Above all, the people needed it for light. In those days after the sun went down, no oil meant no light. As you can see, oil was used for so many different things that one was very fortunate to have plenty of it. So our poor widow all this time was rich and did not know it. And this was the good thing that Elisha showed her.

You say she was foolish not to have thought of it herself? Perhaps she had remembered it but did not know how to use it, or if she did know how, perhaps she was afraid to do so, and it needed Elisha's kindly encouragement to set her to work.

Haven't we all "a pot of oil" that we might use if we worked as hard looking for good as we do looking for evil? This sad mother afraid of losing her two boys is not the only one who forgets his "pot of oil."

Fortunately there are people who see their "pot of oil" and use it—Abraham Lincoln, for instance, who loved to study but could not afford to buy books. Some forty miles from his home lived a person who owned the book he needed, and he walked eighty miles to borrow it—all the way to the man's house and back. I have no doubt he gave thanks that he was able to go for the book. Walking was his "pot of oil," and he used it.

Michael Angelo longed for greater opportunities to study art, and was much encouraged because he had a "pot of oil" which he could use.

"What was the 'pot of oil'?" you ask.

He carried mortar up long ladders in order to watch the frescoers and learn some of their ideas.

A girl wished to study music, but had no money and no piano. Was she discouraged? Not a bit of it. Her "pot of oil" was working

short hours in a department store and taking lessons and practicing at night, and now she teaches in a large musical conservatory.

You ask me, "When the widow remembered her oil, how did Elisha tell her to use it?"

He told her to borrow vessels and kettles from her neighbors and to borrow plenty of them—not to be satisfied with only a few. She had enough oil for many bowls or flagons, and he wanted her to keep thinking of the dishes that were to be filled from her cask, instead of looking all the time at the barrel, wondering how long the oil was going to last and worrying for fear she might not have enough.

All the borrowed jars were to be filled; not one was to be left empty. For Elisha had said, "And thou shalt go in, and shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and pour out into all those vessels; and thou shalt set aside that which is full."

A glad-hearted mother hurried home from Elisha and told the two boys the prophet had shown her how they could help themselves out of their trouble. As soon as she could get the oil ready for the people they would want to buy

it, and probably what her good friend Elisha would advise her to do was to sell it.

Two happy lads went out among the neighbors and borrowed vases, jars, bottles—anything that would hold oil. Then, shutting the door so they would not be disturbed, the mother and the boys began to pour their oil into the borrowed dishes. How they must have hurried, and watched, as jar after jar was filled and set aside. Not a drop of the precious oil must be lost—that oil which the widow only a few hours before had called "nothing."

She was so busy and interested in her work, constantly calling for more dishes, that when one of her sons told her all were filled and there was still plenty of oil left in her cask, she was much astonished.

Back she went to Elisha. She had used her oil and had plenty left. What would he tell her to do with the oil? Sell it, of course. She did not need it all, and her neighbors did need all that she could spare.

By this time some of you have guessed what Elisha meant when he told her to borrow empty vessels of her neighbors and to sell them

the oil. Look at people and see what they need. You may have what will fill those needs. The empty vessels are our neighbors' needs, and our oil is whatever we have that will fill them.

"Go," said Elisha, "sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy sons of the rest."

When home again, she and her sons must have set the dishes filled with the oil where the creditor could see them the very first thing when he came to carry the boys away to be bondmen. The creditor knew the value of oil, and when he looked at the rich display belonging to the widow he would know that her debt would soon be paid and he need not disturb either her or her children further.

The next night when they repeated again David's hymn for their evening prayer, they must have added the words of another of his songs:

"Thou preparest a table before me
in the presence of mine enemies:
Thou hast anointed my head with
oil;
My cup runneth over."

WHY THE WATERS OF JORDAN?

HEALING OF NAAMAN THE LEPER

She was a lonely little girl as she stood in the garden in Damascus. Fruits and flowers were all about her in abundance, the house was beautiful, the people kind, but her young face was sad. The juicy apricot in her hand was untasted as she threw it from her toward some little birds hungrily eying the heavily loaded fruit trees. Two great tears ran down her cheeks, and then a burst of sobs told all who heard that her heart was aching with homesickness. A woman came toward her and gently patted her on the shoulder, saying, "Esther, why do you always come to the south side of the garden when it makes you so sad?"

"Over there in the south is my home," replied the child. "There are my mother and father, my brothers and sisters."

Poor child! She was a little captive maid stolen from her home in Israel by a band of Syrians and brought by them to wait upon the

wife of Naaman, the great captain of Syria's army. Both her master and mistress were kind. In their home Esther had more comforts than she had ever enjoyed in Israel, but it was not home, and that makes the greatest difference to all of us.

Her mistress also had been sad that day because not all the wealth and honor Naaman had received from the Syrian king, not all the victories he had won, had been able to make either him or his wife happy.

"How can people who have everything be miserable?" you ask.

Easily. Persons who have the most are often unable to use what they have. A touring car without gasoline would n't give you any pleasure. Just owning it and seeing it stand in a garage would at last grow tiresome, would it not?

So it was with Naaman. All he had could not give him pleasure. He was envied by no one, his wealth and honor no one coveted because he suffered with a loathsome disease, leprosy. Why, the poorest beggar in the streets would not have changed places with him!

The little girl in the garden saw the grief in the face of her mistress and knew the reason, for she again turned her face southward, but this time with a smile, saying, "Would that my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! then would he recover him of his leprosy."

A wise and loving wish, little maid. You desire the good of those who hold you captive, and because of it God will bless both them and you.

As soon as Naaman heard that he could be healed he made ready at once to start on a journey to the land of Israel. The king of Syria was as anxious as Naaman's family that he should be healed, for Naaman had been faithful to every trust and served his king and country well—so well that he had been called the deliverer of Syria. No one in Syria knew anything about prophets, but it was a superstition among many of the people that to touch the garment of a king frequently healed the sick. So the king of Syria wrote a letter to the king of Israel asking him to heal Naaman of his leprosy. Then he loaded the camels and

burden-bearers, chariots and horsemen, with costly gifts for Israel's king. Silver and gold and ten changes of raiment they were to carry with them to the king who was supposed to be able to cure leprosy. We may know how anxiously the king of Syria desired Naaman's health because the gold and silver he sent into Israel with Naaman would be over thirty thousand of our dollars.

Some of you girls and boys are laughing, and I know why. You are thinking of the time Saul and his servant wanted a favor of Samuel and thought a quarter of a silver shekel was quite enough to pay for it. Only eighteen cents, you are thinking, was all that Saul valued a prophet of his country. And here are these Syrian strangers wanting a favor, not for themselves, but for a loved commander of their army, freely offering a great gift for it.

Soon Naaman and his company arrived at the court of the king of Israel and delivered to him the letter from the king of Syria. Was the king of Israel's heart glad that this great man had come to his kingdom for healing? Not at all. Instead, he was badly frightened. He had

forgotten all about Elisha, or perhaps he had never heard of him. Odd, you say, that the king should not know of so wonderful a prophet. Perhaps it was because he was king that he did not know. Kings are so interested in wars and conquests that they do not think of such simple things as mercy and healing.

When the king of Israel read the letter, he cried, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?" Not a member of his court could answer him as they all stood dismayed before their visitors. They cast frightened glances at one another, and the king in his grief rent his garments, declaring that this letter from the king of Syria was only meant to provoke a quarrel with him. There they stood, Naaman bitterly disappointed to think he had been so foolish as to listen to the tales of a little homesick maid, and the king of Israel ignorant that any healing power was in his kingdom. But when we most need help it always comes, and so it did then, for a message came to the king from Elisha, saying, "Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me.

and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel."

How relieved the king must have been as he watched Naaman with his servants, his horses, and chariots turn away and go toward Elisha's house. Naaman was a great man. He had won high military honors, and everywhere he went he was received with much ceremony. I have no doubt that people shouting and cheering lined every street through which he passed, while martial music sounded before and after his chariots and horsemen on the march. Yet when he came to Elisha's house all was quiet. There was no one waiting to welcome him. Only a messenger standing in the doorway met the famous warrior. He was astonished. What could this young and simple fellow do for him? His journey to Israel, his royal gifts that he had brought with him, were evidently nothing to the prophet nor to his messenger. Why, he was being received with no more honor than would have been given the little maid had she stood before Elisha's door! Perhaps Elisha was not a respecter of persons. He may have thought that a sick person, big or little, great or simple,

only wanted to be healed, and that was the one thing to do for them. What was the glory of a great name if one was suffering? Fame didn't seem to heal one. So Elisha sent by his messenger a simple message to Naaman. It was that he should go to the Jordan and bathe seven times in the river.

Why the waters of Jordan—that muddy, rushing stream? Are not the rivers of my country much better and clearer? thought Naaman. And so he said to his men, "Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?"

Imagine your feelings if you were told to swim in a muddy stream so shallow in parts that you could wade in it—and that, too, when nearer to your home was a deep pool of crystal water. The Jordan was not important, but the rivers of Damascus were, and moreover were beautiful and full of refreshingly clear water. If it was water he needed, surely, thought Naaman, that of the rivers of Damascus would be far better.

So Naaman "turned and went away in a rage." His time had been wasted; his journey

had been in vain. He might better have stayed at home and not listened to the foolish prattle of his captive maid. These must have been his thoughts as with angry eyes and frowning face he began the journey back to Syria. But his officers loved him. He had dealt kindly with them, and their hearts ached with his over his disappointment. So some of them came to him and said, "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?"

That was it exactly. He was angry, as we all are, over what we think is too small a thing for people of our importance to do. To be told to bathe was shocking to a man familiar as he was with the baths and water supply of his home city. But Naaman wanted to be healed. The foul leprosy was eating into his flesh, and unless it was speedily cured he soon would be an object of disgust even to those who loved him best. Elisha's advice was at least worth a trial, so, wise man that he was, he laid aside his pride and listened to the words of his servants.

By the side of the Jordan the little band halted—all eager to see fulfilled the prophet's promise: "Thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." Seven times did he go down under the waters, his attendants breathlessly watching as he arose each time to the surface. One—two—three—four—five—six, they counted, until, as Naaman paused for the seventh plunge, they seemed almost to touch him in their eagerness. He disappeared, then rose and stepped out upon the banks, his face radiant with thanksgiving, for there stood before his soldiers their commander sound and whole. Not a blemish was upon his flesh; the leprosy was healed.

How fast he must have traveled home and told the good news to his wife, and to his king who had so kindly sent him to Israel! You may be thinking so, and it is what many people would have done. But not so Naaman and his followers. He had received a blessing and was thankful. The king of Israel had forgotten the prophet in his midst, but not so this stranger. Naaman felt that he would not dare face his wife or his king, or even look into the honest

eyes of the little maid, unless he had first thanked Elisha and acknowledged Elisha's God, Jehovah. When he again stood before Elisha's door, the prophet himself came out to meet him. All his vain pride Naaman had forgotten. No longer did he think of himself as a great leader, but only as a humble seeker after knowledge. He wished to know more about the Power that had healed him. So in thankfulness he said to Elisha, "Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: . . . . . for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto Jehovah."

But what should he do? He served the king of Syria and must always go with him into the temple of Rimmon. Would Jehovah be angry and think he was not faithful? he asked Elisha. And the prophet, the helper of all who came to him, answered no. If in his heart he really acknowledged Jehovah and his laws, going into the temple of Rimmon would not hurt him. Besides, while he served the king his duty was to do what the king required of him. If he could not be obedient to the king, the only thing for him to do was to leave his service.

And that is what I think Naaman did, for soon after we read in the Bible that there was a new captain of the Syrian host. Naaman then must have learned what the greatest of all teachers said many years afterward: "Ye cannot serve two masters."

"What became of those rich gifts Naaman brought with him?" you are asking. He must have carried most of them back with him, for Elisha refused to accept them. He had not done the work; it was God who had healed this believer in Him. Naaman's faith, and not Elisha's power, had worked this miracle.

Let us watch the happy band as they move toward Syria. We are glad with them that all the people in our story have worked together for good, and that into no heart so far has crept an unkind wish or evil purpose. Each person in the story has been wishing to help another and has sought, not his own, but the other's good, and all have received the reward of peace.

But even the brightest day is followed by night. So across the light and love of this Bible tale there falls a shadow so deep that at first I shrink from telling it to you.

Elisha, the prophet who lived to bless, into whose heart came love for others, had a servant whose heart was as black as Elisha's thought was pure.

"Why did he have such a servant?" you ask.

I will answer you by asking why did the Christ have a Judas among his disciples?

We do not know why, but we do know that Gehazi, Elisha's servant, thought only of himself. In another's need he saw only a chance to reap some advantage for himself. Into his small, narrow soul had never come a thought higher than that of greed. What could he get for himself? was his way of thinking, never how much could he give?

Gehazi stood watching as Elisha dismissed Naaman after refusing any gift from him. You could see his face lengthen and his eyes narrow with disappointment. How his fingers clutched at the doorpost as he thought of all that gold he was not to handle! What, all that treasure allowed to leave us? Gehazi thought. Not so; I at least will get some benefit from the Syrian's visit. The prophet had earned the reward, thought Gehazi. Why should it not be shared

with a faithful servant? The prophet did not wish to claim a reward which he felt belonged, not to himself, but to Jehovah. He wished also to strengthen Naaman's growing faith in Jehovah and wanted him to look to God only, not to his prophet Elisha. Therefore he refused the gift. Where had Gehazi's eyes and ears been all these years that he had lived with Elisha? Blind and deaf to everything but greed and gold.

He followed after Naaman's chariot and told him a falsehood, saying that Elisha had sent him for money and garments for some poor sons of the prophets who had just arrived at Elisha's house. Generous Naaman gave him even more than he had asked, and sent two of his own servants back with Gehazi in order to carry the load. But Gehazi dared not carry his spoil into the house of Elisha, so he dismissed the men after they had left the treasure at his own house.

"And so he deceived Elisha?" you ask.

Oh, no. It is difficult to deceive anyone whose spirit is sincere and truthful. Gehazi's vision was clouded with selfishness and greed,

while Elisha's was clear and keen, for Elisha's heart spoke nothing to him or to others but the truth.

When Gehazi came at Elisha's summons, he was asked where he had been. "I have been nowhere," was the reply.

"Went not my heart with thee, when the man turned from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments . . . . . ?" said Elisha to him. Not even could Gehazi's fertility in falsehood enable him to meet this charge, and so he stood speechless before the prophet. Then Elisha added, "The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever."

You think that is unjust? Before you judge, think for a moment. Remember that those people of long ago often taught by symbolic actions. Elisha did not mean to curse Gehazi. It was the leprous soul eaten by selfishness and greed, the desire to deceive and to defraud, which should forever bear the leprous mark of uncleanness. Leprosy was to those people the scourge of God, and that soul defiled by evil desires was a leprous soul. So upon Gehazi

and upon all his kind the curse of God will fall. Gehazi learned then what everyone has learned since, that "it is never safe to do anything against the truth."

WHEN HEZEKIAH WENT TO CHURCH

HEZEKIAH'S PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE

Not that it was unusual for Hezekiah to go to church am I telling this story, but because one time when he went into the temple such a wonderful thing came to pass on account of his visit that I feel you should hear about it and enjoy it with me. Hezekiah was king of Judah and was one of the three good and great kings that were a blessing to the Hebrew people.

Yes, Israel had more than three kings, many more, but of all she had, only three left behind them a good record and were faithful to the laws of Jehovah. Perhaps you are thinking Hezekiah went to church because he believed it to be a duty or because his father compelled him to go. Not a bit of it, and here is where the surprise is for many of you. He went because he loved to go. To have kept him at home would have been hard work. His father Ahaz had done everything he could to

destroy the worship of Jehovah and to defile His temple. If you are wondering why Hezekiah was so different from his father, I will tell you. He had a good mother.

How do I know that? The Bible, to be sure, says no more about Hezekiah's mother than to give her name, Abi, adding that her father was Zechariah, who probably had some part in the music of the temple and in its services. We can be certain that Abi was a woman with a fine, strong character, for you boys and girls who love history and enjoy reading the lives of great men must know, as I do, that every good man who has become great has always had a mother with force of character and strength of mind.

Suppose we make another visit to Jerusalem. You who watched with me beside the gates to see the queen of Sheba when she entered the city, and followed her into the presence of King Solomon, will be much disappointed at what you will find there when Hezekiah is king. The gardens are no longer beautiful as they once were. A plow seems to have been driven through some of them and they are littered with

arrows. You may possibly stumble over some old chariot wheels buried deep in ruts of earth. A sickly wind whines through gaunt trees often bare of leaves, and even if they have leaves they droop as though it were difficult to live. The steep ascent is rough with scattered stones. The city gates hang aslant on rotting hinges. Some are not closed at all, although the sun has set and it is time they were barred for the coming night. The walls of the city have so many gaps in them that we wonder why gates are necessary, as one could easily slip through the falling ruins so often battered and torn by besieging armies. Now and then a loosened stone drops from a shattered tower on the walls with a crash into the valley below. Altogether it is a dismal picture, not at all like the glory and beauty of Solomon's time.

No, do not turn away and say we must have made a mistake—this is not Jerusalem, the city of David. You are pointing to the many altars on which a human sacrifice is smoldering into ashes. The dying shrieks of a youth being made to "pass through the fire" cause you to shudder with horror. His father passes

us with blood-stained hands and with a smile on his face, for has he not offered his first-born to the fire-god, who will now forgive the father's sin? As we enter the city and pass by the closed doors of the temple, you look in astonishment at the many revolting images of heathen gods within its courts. Surely this cannot be Jerusalem, you insist, for these things do not belong to the worship of Jehovah. It *is* Jerusalem. You remember I told you that of all the kings of Israel and Judah only three were faithful to their people and to their God, Jehovah.

We know that every Hebrew law forbade human sacrifice, and that a man causing his children to "pass through the fire" was to be stoned to death. Israel had good laws.

You ask, "Why did n't she keep them then?"

For the same reason that people in our time do not keep the laws they know are righteous. My story, as you see, is only about people, and people then were the same as they are now, some good, some evil, many lawbreakers, and many wishing to see the law obeyed. No, the people of those long-ago days were only human as we

are. Watch them carefully and see. Isn't it like a looking-glass across which, as time passes, is reflected all human experience, yours and mine as well?

But let us listen to the people of Jerusalem as we walk through their streets. Do you see them shake their heads in doubt as they wonder what kind of king young Hezekiah will make? Ahaz, his father, had overthrown the worship of Jehovah and even put into the temple images of the Asherim, idols of the neighboring heathen kingdom. One old man is saying to his companion, "We need our streets repaired and the city walls rebuilt where they have been torn down."

"Yes," replies his friend, "and our water supply should be improved. And there is the temple; it has been so abused by Ahaz and the kings before him that it will need a thorough cleansing before it will be fit for the worship of Jehovah."

"Look at the watch towers on those walls! They are a shame to Jerusalem," remarks a third.

"There is no longer any hope for our once royal city," observes a sad-faced man. The

hearts of Israel and Judah are so depraved with serving false gods and indulging in foolish pleasures that they no longer take any pride in Jerusalem."

A man joins the group and smiles as one after another respectfully greets him. There is a light in his eyes that at once gives us courage. He surely sees something that is good. He is Isaiah, the prophet-statesman.

"You will have every desire satisfied," he says to the men. "Hezekiah's heart is warm with love for his country and his God. Be patient, and help him in his efforts to redeem Jerusalem and deliver her from her enemies."

"Had Jerusalem enemies in Hezekiah's time?" you ask me.

The city and the Hebrew nation have always had enemies. Even now as we are looking out from her towers down on the peaceful valley below, there is an army on its march intending to capture her treasure and make her people slaves.

You may be saying that Jehovah had made a covenant with Israel and had promised to protect the people and the city from their enemies.

Yes, if they obeyed His laws, but not otherwise. The closed doors of the temple, its desecrated altars, the hideous idols within the city and on every hilltop, show us only too well that Judah and Israel have forsaken Jehovah, and many of the people probably have never known Him.

We enter the city the day Hezekiah is crowned king. Let us visit his palace and watch him as he stands talking with his counselor, Isaiah, the prophet. As we silently conceal ourselves behind the curtains of the doorway he and Isaiah pass us. Outside they turn their faces in the direction of the temple. With upraised arms the young king declares that his first work shall be the cleansing of Jehovah's house, and the purifying of the Levites and the priesthood so that they may be ready for all the temple service.

And all these things he did, even destroying the brazen serpent which Moses had set up in the wilderness to heal the bite of the fiery serpent. When the people objected to this destruction of an old idol and asked that they might still be allowed to burn incense to it, he replied,

"It is nothing but a piece of brass and cannot help you."

Every religious service Hezekiah reëstablished. The passover had been so long neglected that the majority of the people had forgotten the laws about it, and probably there were some who had never heard of it. So the king sent messengers with letters throughout all Judah, Israel, Ephraim, and Manasseh, calling them to Jerusalem to keep the passover. His letters told the people that all the Hebrew country was in danger from her enemies, that many of her people already were in captivity, and that captivity would be the fate of all unless they returned to Jehovah and obeyed His law.

Yes, they listened. There were many who ridiculed the king and probably wondered why such intelligent persons as themselves, so full of new and up-to-date ideas, should give attention to a worship and a God they had forgotten years before. Can this stripling king teach us anything? they inquired among themselves. How their question was answered our story will tell us. A few heard gladly the king's invitation and quickly came to Jerusalem to keep the

passover with him. There were only a few in all, "the remnant," as the Bible calls the little band always faithful to God.

But, small as the gathering was, it accomplished a mighty work. The temple was purged of all uncleanness, every idol and image in the Hebrew land was destroyed, every act of worship to a heathen god was abolished. The priest and Levites again performed the temple service of Jehovah, and they were given the tithes—that is, the tenth part of all the earnings and treasures of the people. How did this please the people? Scripture says they gave so gladly and willingly that more was given than could be used; store-room had to be found for the over supply.

Hezekiah selected and re-edited some of Solomon's proverbs, and when you read them you know his selection was exactly what a man like the king would live by. What were they? Proverbs, twenty-fifth chapter and on through the twenty-ninth chapter. He altered and improved the song service of the temple and had music of different kinds used in the worship.

He repaired the streets, rebuilt the walls, strengthened the towers, built treasuries and storehouses, gave the city a better water supply, helped the farmers to increase their crops and their cattle, and the workmen as well as the farmers to increase their gains. Wealth and all things in plenty were his, but not once did any of his treasure cause him to forget Jehovah. And it was for this reason that he was able to make that memorable visit to the temple of which our story tells.

"How long did it take Hezekiah to do all these good works?" you ask.

For twenty-nine years he was king, and every one of those years saw some good work done by him. He did only one thing at a time and did it thoroughly and quickly. As the Bible says, he did everything with all his heart, also adding that whatever he did with all his heart was a success.

We have toiled up the steep slopes leading to the city and have seen with sorrow the decay into which it was rapidly falling. Then we have turned away to leave it in the hands of its young and noble king and the great prophet

Isaiah, certain that the fortunes of Zion during their lifetime would be blessed.

Years after the evening when Hezekiah declared that the cleansing of the temple should be his first work, let us go back again and see the changes that have come to Jerusalem. But we cannot enter the city. An army is encamped around it. Yes, it is the army of the conquering Assyrian against whom no nation has been able to prevail. Behind them they have always left a trail of desolation and despair.

Will they take Jerusalem? Wait and see.

It was not the hour of prayer. Neither was there sacrifice or service going on in the temple when Hezekiah went through its courts and pushed aside the curtains which hid the Holy of Holies, for he stood before the ark of the covenant, the sacred ark just above which the people believed the presence of God dwelt.

"But we thought only the high priest, once a year, on the day of Atonement, was allowed to enter the most holy place," you say.

That was the old law and also the law as it existed but was not heeded, in the day of Hezekiah. This visit Hezekiah made, however,

was at a time of deep distress and great danger. An army was hammering at the gates of Jerusalem; a vicious letter from a cruel king demanded that Hezekiah give the city to the enemy. Hezekiah went into the the temple to talk with God. Jehovah was to him a real friend. He could not see, but he did feel this Power, and knew that he stood in the presence of One who had promised never to leave nor to forsake those who really put their whole trust in Him. He had been taught that here within the Holy of Holies one could come closest to Jehovah, and so in the hour of his greatest need he stepped within it and asked God to hear him.

"If an army was besieging Jerusalem, why didn't he call out his soldiers?" you boys ask.

For the same reason that David refused to wear Saul's armor when he went out to meet Goliath. Both David and Hezekiah had great faith in God and very little in armies and their machinery.

The ark of the covenant—which was really an oblong box—had above it, directly in the center, a spot called the mercy-seat; over this

seat were stretched out the wings of the cherubim. You might have called them angels. To the Israelites the Mercy-seat was where God himself dwelt, and the wings of the cherubim signified His sheltering care. Now we know why Hezekiah disregarded the priestly law and went to lay the letter before this seat.

Into the sacred place Hezekiah had carried the letter and laid it before the Mercy-seat. It was here he would ask and receive God's mercy for his people. The letter was from Sennacherib, saying, "Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly; and shalt thou be delivered?"

Rabshakeh, the messenger of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, had insultingly talked with Hezekiah's three officers—his treasurer, his secretary, and his historian. The haughty Assyrian soldier kept talking to the men upon the wall in the Jews' language, even though Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah, the messengers of

HEZEKIAH ASKING GOD'S MERCY FOR HIS PEOPLE

Hezekiah, had asked that he speak in Assyrian, as they understood that language. Like all other bullies, the Assyrian thought that courtesy meant weakness, so he began to scoff at the three men, blaspheme against Jehovah, and speak with contempt of Hezekiah's folly. By his folly the Assyrian meant Hezekiah's trust in Jehovah. "You are being deceived by Hezekiah," shouted the Assyrian commander; "put your trust in my king and you shall have mercy." Rabshakeh offered the listeners upon the wall homes, property, and all things in plenty if they would desert Hezekiah and serve Sennacherib.

The men upon the wall made no answer. The Assyrian general had not frightened them. They "rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah." What were those words?

"Be strong and of good courage, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him; for there is a greater with us than with him: with him is an arm of flesh; but with us is Jehovah our God to help us, and to fight our battles."

The king and the men of Judah knew well what had been the fate of every nation that had dared rebel against the despotic rule of Sennacherib. Had they not been told of captives lying naked before that monarch in order that they might be whipped to death? Starvation, exile, imprisonment, and every punishment that fiendish cruelty could suggest was employed to torture any people who resisted the will of Assyria's king.

It was in this hour that Hezekiah went into the temple, carrying with him the fate of Jerusalem and its people. He would prove that the evil tongue of this heathen king could not alter Jehovah's purpose to protect every soul that called upon Him, and so he prayed:

"O Jehovah, the God of Israel, that sittest above the cherubim, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth. Incline thine ear, O Jehovah, and hear; open thine eyes, O Jehovah, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, wherewith he hath sent him to defy the living God. Of a truth, Jehovah, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations

and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone; therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O Jehovah our God, save thou us, I beseech thee, out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou Jehovah art God alone."

When his prayer was ended, Hezekiah left the temple and at the door met a messenger from Isaiah. Through the mouth of the prophet came Jehovah's answer, saying of Sennacherib, "He shall not come unto this city, nor shoot an arrow there, neither shall he come before it with shield, nor cast up a mound against it . . . . For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake."

That night Hezekiah's rest must have been sweet. No troubled dreams of broken walls and captive exiles disturbed his sleep. He and his people were at rest. Not so the Assyrian host outside the city, for from the wings of night there had fallen a black pestilence upon the besieging army. So great was the number of

dead that lay in their midst they dared not stay longer in the place. Without one blow at the city they had come to capture, they turned and went to their own land, and Hezekiah had no further trouble with the Assyrians.

Do you ask me, "Was this an answer to his prayer?" I will let you settle this question for yourselves. But before I leave you let me add that it is not wisdom to doubt something one has never tried.

TWICE TWO IS FIVE

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM AND THE FIERY FURNACE

Let us go up to-day to "The city of the great king."

"Oh, this story is n't in the beginning time," I hear some little girl say, "because they did n't have kings then!"

No, the beginning time is past and a long, long way behind us.

You remember little Benjamin and his sister Sarah turning away from the promised land and wondering as they walked why they should go back again into the wilderness. You remember, too, the promise made to Jacob that he and his children's children should inherit all of that beautiful country in which he lay asleep and dreamed the dream that made him a better man.

All these things had come to pass. For Benjamin and Sarah entered into the promised land with the great leader Joshua when they had grown to be a man and woman and had

children of their own. Jacob's seed—as his descendants were called—had spread "abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south," as God had promised, and the beautiful land of Palestine belonged to Israel.

In the time of our story the little folks and the big folks were told stories about the shepherd boy David who had fought with the giant Goliath and saved his people. Their prophets kept telling them not to forget Samuel and his message to Eli. They were also to remember the last words of Moses, which he spoke just before he left Israel and the people entered Canaan with Joshua.

What were the words of Moses? That Canaan, the promised land, was theirs while they obeyed God's laws, but that they would lose it if they disobeyed.

Do you remember waking very early in the morning and trying to make out what the different objects were which you saw in the gray mist of the early dawn? Then as you stood by your window and watched the misty gray gloom disappear, the trees and houses

began to stand out clearly, one by one. Little red threads of color pierced the white clouds, and then a church spire in the distance caught the first sunbeam, and window after window of the houses turned into flame as they reflected the rays of the sun. All was quiet until a cart rumbling over the pavement broke the silence and you knew the milkman was coming with your breakfast milk. You heard the rooster in the yard next door tell his family it was time to be up and stirring. The birds began to chatter, and a robin flew to his mate in the tree beside your window with a fine fat worm for her and the babies. Soon Mother called that breakfast was ready, and when it was over you started off to school.

Let us think of the "beginning time" as the gray dawn of the early morning when things seem dim and nothing stands out very clearly.

When this story opens, Israel's morning time had passed and she had entered the noontide of her history.

The people no longer kept sheep and cattle and dwelt in tents. They had built

cities and had fine houses and beautiful palaces; had great kings and large armies with horses and chariots. They were a nation old enough to have had a history written about them. Some of their people had been famous generals, kings, poets, and statesmen. They had wealth, and a temple so beautiful that even to the present time there has never been anything more magnificent.

"Before you go on with the story," I hear some boy asking, "will you not tell us why you say twice two is five? Even my little sister in the kindergarten knows better than that."

It does sound foolish, does n't it? But when we have finished our story you will know that even some grown people don't know any better.

Shall we climb up to the city or wait until some boy comes by with his donkey and gives us a ride through the gates? Before we do either, let us stand here in the valley and look upward.

"What steep rocks," you say, "and a deep gorge around every side but one!"

Yes, and on top of those rocks is the city with its great wall and strong towers.

"What is it," you ask, "that glitters so in the sunshine?"

That is the wonderful golden temple of Solomon, dazzling and sparkling as the sun itself.

Suppose the roof of your church was made of gold, and as you opened the golden doors to go inside the church you stepped on a polished golden floor. Or perhaps, if the day was warm and you had gone early to church, you had waited in the porch for your friends, and as you stood there you admired its golden ceiling. Suppose the carving of the pillars was also overlaid with gold, and looked like leaves and flowers molded out of that precious metal. Suppose your church windows had no glass in them, but were lattice work, and around them blazed and flashed costly jewels. Rich, heavy curtains, wonderfully embroidered, divided the rooms. There were golden candlesticks, and everything you used inside your church was made of gold, silver, ivory, and rare woods with ornaments of precious stones. If your church

were like this, it would be like Solomon's temple in magnificence, but would not have its form.

The glory and pride of Zion was this temple. And as we look from the valley, the temple and the city and its walls seem to hang suspended from the sky and merely touch the great, jagged rocks upon which they stand; or, as a Hebrew poet describes it in one of the Psalms,

> "Beautiful in elevation, the
> joy of the whole earth,
> Is mount Zion, . . .
> The city of the great King.
> . . . . . .
> Walk about Zion, and go round about her:
> Number the towers thereof.
> Mark ye well her bulwarks;
> Consider her palaces:
> That ye may tell it to the generation following."

"How happy people must have been in such a city!" you say.

They could have been, but they were not. It is not always people who may be happy that are so.

We must hurry up the steep ascent if we mean to enter the city before dark. When the sun sets, the gates will be closed and we shall have to stay outside until morning. You think you would like to be in the valley all night, for the air is warm and the gardens will be beautiful in the moonlight. They are the king's gardens, laid out years ago when David and Solomon lived. Yes, David had wonderful gardens at the foot of the cliffs outside the city. He of course loved flowers and all the beautiful things of nature, and he it was who said,

"The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament showeth his handiwork.
Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night showeth knowledge."

To-night we shall not wait. There are stirring scenes going on in the city, and we must be there if we are to see them. Besides, put your ear to the ground. Do you not hear that steady tramp-tramp-tramp and the rumble as of a heavy body dragged along the ground?

It is the army of the enemy coming to take the city—it is in danger. Let us get behind

its strong walls before the soldiers encamp around it.

Now that we are inside and the gates are closed, we shall stand quietly aside in this dark corner of one of the narrow streets and watch what happens.

From one of those low, flat-roofed houses there comes the cry of little children. They want their mother, but she will not come, for she and her husband and older sons ventured too far outside the city gates yesterday and were seized by the enemy and carried away captive.

The lights are out in the great gray towers upon the city walls. The huge battering-rams of the Babylonian army will know where to strike if a light is in those towers.

With his mantle drawn across his face, and his shoulders drooping as if with weariness, a man comes slowly along the street. He hears the children's cry and enters the house. Soon he comes out with a tiny girl wrapped in his cloak and leading a little lad by the hand. Poor little orphans, the kind prophet Jeremiah will see that they have their supper.

A group of people meets them and turns aside. In the faces of these people as they pass the prophet are both hate and fear. Why?

Jeremiah has warned them that their city is to be destroyed and that it is useless for them to try to save it. He has told them that their sins have cost them their city and their liberty.

The people of the city do not want to stop sinning. Everybody sins, they think; why should n't they?

Besides, they don't want their neighbors, the other nations, to call them odd. If they should stop worshiping idols, making their children "pass through the fire," and other awful practices, and instead should serve Jehovah by doing justly and living righteously, they would be an odd or peculiar people.

In the history of the Hebrew kings we read of Jehovah speaking to the people and saying,

"Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments . . . . They would not hear, but hardened their neck, like to . . . . their fathers, who believed not in Jehovah their God. And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant . . . . and they followed

vanity, and became vain, and went after the nations that were round about them, concerning whom Jehovah had charged them that they should not do like them. And they forsook all the commandments of Jehovah their God. . . . Therefore Jehovah was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight."

The hour when Israel should be carried away into captivity had come. The steady tread of the great Babylonian army sent terror to the people's hearts. They did not dare go to Jeremiah for advice. He would only say, "Your city is doomed." They had imprisoned him many times, and once had tried to throw him over the cliffs to the valley below; but nothing seemed to hurt him, and his warnings only grew the more severe. Besides, the army of which they stood in fear was friendly to the prophet—perhaps the enemy respected his fearless honesty.

There were other prophets. Some of them were now in the towers upon the walls watching the army as it encircled the city. "Shall we surrender?" the white-faced people asked these smiling prophets. "Jeremiah says our sins have been our ruin and that our foes will conquer."

"Everything is going to be well with you. Don't listen to Jeremiah," we can almost hear these advisers reply as they made ready to flee if it should be necessary.

"As the mountains are round about
Jerusalem,
So Jehovah is round about his
people,"

the Psalmist had said. But the people had forgotten all about Jehovah, the God of Israel. They had even lost the Book in which that helpful promise had been made. All they could see or think of now were the hills "round about Jerusalem" covered with soldiers encamping there month after month, determined to starve the city into surrendering. From forts on those hills the enemy daily sent missiles of stone into the doomed city. The people dared not open the city gates. Their bones began to pierce through their flesh, the weak and the sick were dying, and each day the strong grew more feeble from lack of food; but they would not yield.

It is night; not a light is to be seen anywhere except in the camp of the Babylonian army.

The people of the city are asleep, trusting in the strength of their city's massive walls. As they sleep perhaps in their dreams they feel the ground trembling, and for a moment visions of tottering towers and falling walls disturb their slumbers.

Sleep on, Jerusalem. That shock was a break made in your wall by the enemy's battering-rams. Already the soldiers are quietly stealing along the black-stone pavements of your streets and entering your holy temple. Your king and his warriors have quietly slipped out of one of your gates and are fleeing to the distant hills. When you open your eyes again to greet the morning sun, it will be to look into the faces of your conquerors.

The royal palace and the golden temple were set on fire. The huge copper sea of Solomon, standing in the court of the temple, and the massive copper pillars or columns supporting the roof of the temple porch, were broken in pieces by the soldiers and carried away, together with all the temple's silver and gold and jewels.

Think of copper columns twenty-seven feet, or more, high, and eighteen feet around, so beautiful that Solomon gave them names just as we give names to girls and boys. What were the names he gave the columns? Jachin and Boaz, which meant "strength" and "stability." Just the right names for pillars that held up a heavy roof lined with gold, were they not?

"What is a copper sea?" you ask. It was really a gigantic bowl in which the priests washed their hands and feet before they offered sacrifice. Solomon had ordered one made so large that it would hold ten thousand gallons of water, and the people called it a sea. It was made of copper and rested on the backs of twelve great copper oxen.

The beautiful gardens were trodden down, the city walls were reduced to rubbish, and the forests outside the city were destroyed by the Babylonians. The soldiers spared nothing that they could ruin. The people, old men and little children, young men and maidens, were torn from their homes and separated from their families, to be sent captives to the city of

Babylon. In the desolate city only the poorest and feeblest of its people were left.

"What became of Jeremiah? Was he made captive?" you ask.

No, both Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and Nebuzaradan, the commander of his army, were friendly to the prophet. Don't you remember what the wise man says in Proverbs? "When a man's ways please Jehovah, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him."

Jeremiah had served Jehovah. The faith of the prophet and his service had protected him from the Babylonians. He was given his liberty and was told that he might live where he pleased, and Nebuchadnezzar warned all his own people against doing harm to him.

I asked you to go with me to "The city of the great king," and together we entered the gates of Jerusalem and watched from our dark corner as the city fell.

Now come with me to Babylon, where our captives have been taken. We will stop in front of Nebuchadnezzar's palace, enter, pass

through its halls, and lift that heavy curtain which hides the room we wish to see.

Yes, there they are, three fine-looking youths; they belong to the "blood royal" of Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar has had them trained in all the "learning of the Chaldeans," who were his people. The lads have been in Babylon three years, and in their examinations have always won the highest marks. They are in the personal service of the king and already have positions of authority. What are their names? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

We are interrupted by shouts and cheers from persons outside the palace. Crowds of people are pushing toward an open square of the city where stands a huge image of gold. Let us follow them. There is a burst of music; the blare of the cornet and the shrill pipe of the flute rise above it all. Why do all the people go down upon their knees and hold up their hands in worship to the golden idol as they hear the cornet's call?

It is the king's command. All who do not obey are to "be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

You look around for our three lads from Jerusalem, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and cannot find them. Let us go back to their room and see if they are there.

Yes, but no longer studying or chatting pleasantly with one another. Their faces are very serious, but they are not sad or frightened. A messenger from the king is with them. He has said that because they had not worshiped the golden image the king was angry, and that they must come before him and give the reason for their disobedience.

Let us follow them into the king's presence. They bow before the furious king, then rise and wait to hear him speak. The soldiers and guards of the palace wonder why these lads do not beg and cringe as persons who offend the king usually do. The smiling courtiers are waiting to hear Nebuchadnezzar condemn these culprits to the punishment of fire. The captive foreigners have been favored by the king and have positions the courtiers covet.

What! Not afraid of me nor of my power, thinks the king; and so he asks: "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?"

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego are not looking at the cruel face of the king. They are thinking of a song of David which they had often sung in the temple at Jerusalem:

" . . . . O Jehovah!
. . . . Thou art my God.
. . . . . .
Make thy face to shine upon thy servant."

Not the face of a vindictive king but the face of Jehovah was what they saw.

Shall they kneel and ask favors of a helpless block of wood or gold because a king requires it—a king who is himself helpless in Jehovah's presence?

Our captive youths remember that they and their people are in Babylon because they had served idols instead of obeying the laws of Jehovah, the invisible God, of whom no image can be made. Also, had not Solomon prayed when he dedicated his costly temple: "If thy people . . . . make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captive, saying, 'We have sinned' . . . . then hear thou their prayer and their supplication . . . . and maintain their cause?"

Had not Jeremiah told them that doing evil only makes more evil, and that it was foolishness to do wrong and expect good to result? Why, that was as foolish as saying twice two is five!

"Is it of purpose," Nebuchadnezzar asks them, "that ye serve not my god, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?"

The three boys with one voice answer, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

"Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury . . . . And he commanded certain mighty men . . . . to cast them into the burning fiery furnace."

The king is anxious to show his power, so anxious that he does not give the men who execute his orders time to protect themselves against the awful heat. As they open the

top of the furnace and hurl in the brave lads, bound hand and foot, the fiery tongues shoot upward and burn to death the soldiers of the king.

Watch the king from a safe distance as he peers into the furnace. Its fiery breath even from where he sits scorches his flesh. But why does he start and gaze with wide-open eyes into its depths? Hot as the flame is, his face is whitening and he trembles with terror. See! His knees shake under him. His voice is hoarse as, rising, he points to the door of the great oven and says, "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?"

"True, O king," is the answer.

He leans heavily upon one of his soldiers. The mighty monarch, the wave of whose hand means life or death to his subjects, is weak as a straw driven before the wind. He lifts his head and listens as a song of triumph comes from the furnace mouth: "They shall not be confounded who put their trust in thee."

"I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the . . . . fourth is like a son of the gods,"

Nebuchadnezzar replies to his questioning soldiers.

He springs to the furnace mouth in spite of the outstretched hands of his courtiers, who fear he may be harmed by the flames which like a red mountain tower above them.

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the Most High God, come forth, and come hither," he entreats.

And they came forth, the king retreating slowly from them as they approached him.

Nebuchadnezzar is afraid as he asks himself the question, what mighty power is this before whom his will is worth no more than that of his most helpless slave? He thinks that if this power be as cruel as himself, he has need to tremble, for it may destroy him as readily as it preserved the three lads.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego came forth unharmed. "The fire had no power upon their bodies, nor was the hair of their head singed, neither were their "hosen" changed, nor had the smell of fire passed on them."

It was but lately that the king's wrath had condemned these youths to death because

they had not obeyed his whims. All was changed now. He knew nothing of mercy; vengeance was the law of this heathen king. His gods taught him nothing better, and in the same way that he thought of his own gods, so did he think of the God of the Hebrew captives. He felt it was not best to anger the God who could save as Jehovah had saved, and so he spoke kindly to the lads, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego!"

Nebuchadnezzar had often heard these lads talking of God and had laughed at their faith. Could any power equal his, the king's, he had asked himself? He had been answered and was silenced.

"How is it that you were not hurt?" he asked the youths, and they replied, "Once a king of our nation, David was his name, was delivered from a great danger and afterward thanked Jehovah, saying,

"'The angel of Jehovah encampeth round about
them that fear him,
And delivereth them.'

"Of this we thought, O king, and 'the angel of Jehovah came down into the oven

. . . . and made the midst of the furnace as it had been a moist whistling wind.'"

"I make a decree," said Nebuchadnezzar, "that every people, nation, and language which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces . . . . because there is no other god that is able to deliver after this sort." Then the king gave Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego high offices in the province of Babylon.

Let us go again and stand in the empty room from which our lads have gone. They will not come back, for they are no longer captives. We will drop the curtain which hides their door and slip quietly out of the palace into the streets of the city. Hand in hand we walk until we reach the city gates. But before we go our separate ways will you tell me, was it the boys or the king who said, "Twice two is five?"

AT THE KING'S TABLE

DANIEL AND THE KING'S OFFICER

It was night in Babylon. The soldiers patrolling the walls had called the hour of midnight, and the watchmen in the towers had answered, "All is well." Even a cock in the distance had saluted this hour of darkness with a lusty crow. It was the time to be at rest, but Babylon, the queen city of Chaldea, knew not quietness. Through her streets were reeling boisterous revelers whose drunken shouts disturbed a few citizens who preferred sleep to midnight orgies. Babylon's armies again had been victorious, and should she not celebrate the homecoming of her soldiers with their thousands of Hebrew captives?

Into the temple of their gods they had carried the gold and silver vessels used in the worship of Jehovah. Jerusalem had been stripped of her beauty and her wealth, her walls destroyed, her temple and every house of value burned. The poor, the weak, and the sick had been abandoned, left to starve and die amid the desolate ruin of their city. But the youth of

Judah, her princes and nobles, those with wealth and those skilled in science or in some useful art, were brought to Babylon to serve its king.

There were four of these captives who had not been herded with the others. As the sentry's call told the midnight hour they sat together in a room of Nebuchadnezzar's palace, their heads almost touching as they repeated among themselves the news the high chamberlain of the king had brought them when he served their supper.

"We cannot do this thing," said Daniel, "for it is dishonoring our God." Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, his companions in captivity, were silent. Daniel, two years older than they, had always taken the lead. He was a mere lad of about eighteen, to be sure, but as the lads studied together in the schools of the prophets at Jerusalem, he had always been selected by his teachers to do every important work. "We are here in Babylon because Israel did not keep Jehovah's laws," continued Daniel, "and although our prophets have said our nation should return home after seventy

years, it will be because here we have obeyed His precepts."

"But we are prisoners," replied his companions, "and must do the will of our master."

Daniel's clear eyes looked fearlessly into theirs. His parents and theirs had perished in the ruins left behind them, but these parents had belonged to the royal blood of Israël and had taught these lads Jehovah's laws. Daniel did not know what fear was; he trusted in his God and knew that meant safety. When he had knelt at prayer, his mother had told him,[1] "Human terror precipitates loss, but who trusts in the Lord will be safe." It was not wise to be afraid, he told his friends; that would only make matters worse. The three younger lads, in doubt, shook their heads. They did not intend to yield to the king's wishes, but how could they avoid doing so?

Daniel laughed cheerily. He never seemed to be sad, as every good thing with him seemed possible. Because of this he had many friends. Even the king had admired the lad's spirit, and the chamberlain and steward loved him. When

[1]Ferrar Fenton

people really please God they at the same time please man. Many years before, had not Solomon, the wise, said, "When a man's ways please Jehovah, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him?"

So Daniel this night encouraged his companions and told them that when morning came he would have a plan for them to act upon.

What was it the king required of them?

He admired their beauty, their wisdom, and the courage they had shown. Not a complaint had they uttered during the tedious march from Jerusalem to Babylon, and, although the officers on the way often had been cruel, not once had any one of the lads cringed or begged a favor.

Such spirit as that will serve me well, thought Nebuchadnezzar, and I shall have these lads instructed in all the learning of the Chaldeans, so that after three years' training they may take their places in my court.

A king's favorite, to sit at the king's table — that is, feed on his dainties — could anything be more fortunate? said the other prisoners not so favored.

At the king's table, yes. What the others enviously coveted, to Daniel and his three companions was a sin. Could they avoid it? We shall see.

Daniel was a determined youth. He, like David, had a purpose and an aim and, like that king of olden time, he meant to hit the mark at which he aimed.

Did he do so? Let me answer by asking you to look about you. Are the people who shilly shally from one thing to another, who are never quite sure of what they want to do, the ones upon whom you can depend? Or is it the persons with fixed purposes, who turn neither to the right nor to the left but go straight forward to their goal, in whom you have confidence? In our day we call such people successful, but, after all, it is only knowing one's own mind and sticking to it. Nothing very peculiar about that, is there,—except that it is odd so few people do it?

In the morning when the steward brought them the rich food, the same as that served at the royal table, Daniel and his three friends refused to eat.

"We are defiled if we eat it," said Daniel. "Give us only water, and with it herbs and grains."

To the steward this request sounded like asking that they might be allowed to starve to death, so he replied, "I shall forfeit my head if you do not eat. Your pale faces and hollow eyes will show that you are not fed or cared for."

"Give us ten days' trial," urged Daniel, "and see if we do not at the end of that time look as sound and in as good health as the other lads for whom the king has appointed this rich food."

The steward consented. He believed that Daniel was wrong, but the youth had always kept his word and had dealt kindly and justly with everyone, so it could do no harm to humor him in his request. The ten days over, the lads would be glad to have some of the king's dainties and to drink his wines.

Daniel's fellow captives, with the exception of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, made much fun of him. "Why not enjoy these rich feasts?" they said to him. "Make as much of this opportunity as you can; it will be hard

DANIEL

enough for you when you begin to be in the king's service," were their words.

"Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die," was not the rule of Daniel's life nor of that of his three friends. They understood why their faces at the end of the ten days "appeared fairer, and they were fatter in flesh."

You are thinking that you also know, and if I should ask you to tell me, you would say, "Man doth not live by bread only, but by everything that proceedeth out of the mouth of Jehovah doth man live."

Each day that they had eaten their simple food the chamberlain and steward had looked at them anxiously. Did the lads show signs of weakness? Were they listless and dull in their studies? Not a bit of it. Instead, they were ahead in all their classes, and could study harder and work longer without feeling tired than any of the other boys. The king's officers were astonished. They knew nothing of self-control; their gods taught them only self-indulgence.

When the ten days were over, the steward with a beaming face gave them their breakfast of pulse, or grains, and water. Now he was

certain that Daniel's words to him were true, and that it was safe never again to offer him and the three other lads any of the king's dainties.

What had Daniel said to the steward? He had told him that obeying Jehovah harmed no one; that the heads of the officers would not be imperiled by granting him his wish. Everyone who did right was not cursed, but instead was blessed.

The three years of training passed swiftly by and the lads were now daily waiting to be summoned to the king's presence. He would examine them and try in every way to trip them with hard questions. Many a lad returned from that royal council-chamber trembling with fright and with despair in his eyes because he had not been accepted. To be refused meant bitter slavery.

One night the curtain which shielded their room from view was hastily drawn aside and a harsh voice commanded, "The king desires your presence. Be ready at once to meet him." What royal caprice, what selfish whim was this that at this late hour he summoned the youths to him?

To be examined by the king, of course. The envious among their fellow students said that, taken by surprise as they were, they must surely fail.

Daniel arose quietly and as quietly replied to the messenger, "We are ready." Then the four lads followed the page into the council-chamber. The king looked at them with favor. But he meant to be severe with them, and if they failed he would have no mercy. They were Hebrews and his captives. He had forbidden the mention of Jehovah's name among his prisoners, and yet some rumors had reached his ears that it was in Jehovah that these lads trusted. Their bodies did not tremble, their voices were firm and steady as without hesitance they answered the king's questions. There was no timid shrinking with downcast eyes as they stood before him — this monarch whose word could command for them life or death, slavery or freedom. Instead, they stood erect, graceful, and beautiful in their fearlessness, their clear, kindly eyes looking directly into those of the king. The court held its breath in amazement, expecting every moment

that Nebuchadnezzar would strike them dead in his wrath at what his courtiers called impudence. Servility was all this court knew when it dealt with kings. But the brave youths were unharmed for the king admired their courage. The king was a conqueror, and he knew another conquering spirit when he saw it. It is only a coward who despises courage, especially when it is tempered with courtesy.

The wise men of Chaldea were present, the astrologers—those who search the heavens; the soothsayers—those who foretell events; and the magicians; all were ready to detect any failure. Some leaned forward in their eagerness to be the first to correct any error Daniel and his friends might make in their answers to the king's questions and to theirs. The test over, the delighted king leaned back in his seat with satisfaction and told the court herald to announce that these four youths had exceeded even the wise men of his realm in their knowledge and understanding. These are fine youths for my court and for my service, thought the king. Then he dismissed them after appointing them to places of honor in his household.

Let us follow them to their room. As they enter their door the sentry upon the city walls calls the hour of midnight, and is answered by the watchman in the tower repeating the welcome words, "All is well." In the distance, as it did three years ago this very night, a cock crows its greeting to the hour.

Daniel turned to his companions and lifted his face and arms heavenward. They know the gesture; it is the one of prayer. As his lips move we know without hearing what it is he says within his heart: "With prayer have we prevailed with God and with men; blessed be the name of Jehovah forever."

MEASURED

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST

Stories of kings are usually not very interesting, filled as they are with wars and troubles of many kinds. Soldiers, martial music, the roar of cannon, glittering spears, and shining shields in large part make up the history of kings. Velvet and ermine and golden crowns, heartaches and disappointments, instead of joy and gladness, are the portion of those who rule with a royal scepter in their hands.

There was once a king so great in his own eyes that he thought of himself and his kingdom as superior to everyone and everything.

Beautiful Babylon, wonderful city of the plain! Was she not called "The Mistress of Kingdoms," and had she not conquered all the nations against whom she had fought? Were not her astrologers, her magicians, and her counselors famous for their wisdom, and was she not skilled in all the learning of the Chaldeans?

We have heard of people being drunk with wine, but did you ever know of a city so drunken with a sense of it own importance that it said,

"I shall be mistress forever. I am, and there is none else beside me?" a city that trusted in its wickedness, saying, "None seeth me"?

These were the words of Babylon, queen city of the Chaldeans. This city and Belshazzar, her king, tell us a most fascinating story. They had no intention of telling one, nor did they know that thousands of years after they had told it, little people and big people would be interested in reading it.

"How can people tell a story and not know that they are telling it?"

The answer is so plain that I am surprised you ask the question. When you use your eyes and your ears, don't you learn many things from people and objects around you when they do not know they are telling you anything? Sometimes, perhaps, you laugh to yourself over what you have discovered and everyone else thinks you know nothing about. Everybody, and everything, has a story to tell about itself. Look! Listen! You may be the one who will hear it.

Belshazzar lived when the world was young, before America was discovered, or even Europe

was anything more than a thinly settled wilderness inhabited mostly by barbarians. He was very powerful, and thought there was nothing in all the world as mighty as the capital of his kingdom, the beautiful Babylon.

And there were many reasons for his thinking so — so many, in fact, that he forgot the few good reasons why it was safer to be humble than to be proud. The kings of his country had conquered the other nations, made captives of their people, seized their writings, destroyed their libraries, and leveled to the ground all the beauty and magnificence of their cities. Anything and everything that was costly and of value had been carried away from the conquered cities and brought to Babylon that she might be enriched.

She and her king were really great robbers, and did not know that the power of which they boasted could last only until another king and country grew strong enough to overcome them.

"Their libraries!" you say. "How could people have libraries when they had no books?"

But they had books, many of them.

"But there was no paper at that time. How could books be made?" you ask.

They used clay tablets or flat, square stones with words cut into them by sharp tools. And sometimes they used the dried and prepared skins of animals. If you had wanted to draw a book out of a library you might have had to carry home with you a box filled with clay tablets which gave you only one chapter of the book you wished to read. Or, had you been allowed to draw out the whole volume at once, you might have had to hire several people to carry home for you as many as a dozen boxes.

"What a nuisance those clay tablets must have been!" you say.

No, they were valuable, and it is because of them that you may know something to-day of Babylon and the glory of her kingdom.

People in those days enjoyed setting fire to everything belonging to their enemies. It was the surest way of entirely destroying anything. But the clay tablets with their inscriptions escaped the fire, were buried deep under the rubbish, and centuries after, when they were

unearthed, could be read as plainly as on the day they were written.

All the countries round about envied the greatness of Babylon; and the Medes and the Persians, her powerful neighbors, had decided that they would conquer her and divide her wealth among themselves.

It was for this reason that, at the time of our story, Belshazzar and his lords were shut up in Babylon and the gates closed so that no one could go in or out.

They were not afraid; why should they be? Was not Babylon, the mighty, able to defend herself? The Medes and the Persians might hammer away for years at her massive walls and never be able to make a break in them. The Babylonians themselves knew of no instrument of war that could destroy walls three hundred feet high and seventy-five feet thick, such as theirs were; and of course no other kingdom had any knowledge not possessed by them.

"They might starve," you say.

They were not in the least danger of starvation. A city fifteen miles square had plenty of room in it for great storehouses which were

filled with food enough to last for years. No, the people felt very secure, and may have had some contempt for the army outside which was so foolish as to think that Babylon could be overthrown.

Babylon of Chaldea, proud of her learning, had overlooked some wisdom. It was of no importance, she may have thought.

"What was that wisdom?"

Just a few prophecies made years before by some simple Hebrew wise men whom we have since called prophets. And these words were treasured in the minds of the Israelite captives living in Babylon.

"What were those prophecies?"

That all wickedness, injustice, and worship of idols must cease. Even if they seemed to conquer for a time, it was only for a time, for Jehovah, the God of righteousness, would surely destroy everything that was not good.

The Hebrew captives had often repeated Jeremiah's words at their hour of prayer down by the riverside—for they had no temple in Babylon—and once Belshazzar overheard them as he and his lords walked on the river's banks.

For a moment only was the king disturbed. He would not interfere with their worship, and as for the prophecy, it was only a Hebrew one anyway and he need not feel distressed at the words or at the expectations of his captives.

Would you like to know what Jeremiah had prophesied against Babylon?

"And these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith Jehovah, for their iniquity . . . . and I will make it desolate for ever . . . . and I will recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the work of their hands."

To be sure, thought Belshazzar, the seventy years have nearly passed, but my kingdom is mighty and my people fear me.

True, O king, they do fear you, and for that reason you cannot trust them. Even our girls and boys of to-day know better than to feel safe for such a reason.

Wandering about the city, playing games, and giving feasts soon grew very tiresome to Belshazzar. The city was large and there was

much to see and to do in it, but when one is a prisoner the most attractive place becomes unpleasant. And the mighty king really was a prisoner within his own walls; to open the city gates meant to let the Persians in.

What should he do? He would give "a great feast to a thousand of his lords." The whole city should have days of reveling, wine should flow like water, and food in abundance should be upon all tables. It should not be an ordinary feast, but one whose splendor should dazzle his people and show the enemy outside how little they troubled Babylon. Another reason for giving this feast was that it was the time of one of the nation's great religious festivals.

So the invitations were given and the thousand lords came. Each one as he entered the palace halls was greeted with a kiss by hosts appointed by the king to welcome the guests.

The palace gardens were heavy with the perfume of flowers and spices, and blazing torches in the hands of slaves made all glow and glitter like a scene in fairyland. The helmets and

shields of soldiers on guard flashed as brightly as a good holiday rubbing could make them. Slave girls richly dressed anointed the beards, faces, and garments of the guests with perfumed ointment. It was a gay scene. No expense had been spared to make the nights and days devoted to the feast one continuous round of revelry.

Dancing girls in filmy skirts and spangled scarfs, whose ankles and arms sparkled with costly jewels, amused Belshazzar and his nobles, and shrill music from flute and pipe charmed their ears.

Then Belshazzar commanded that the gold and silver vessels once used in the temple at Jerusalem be brought in, the vessels his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, carried to Babylon when Jerusalem was conquered and Israel made captive. So they were brought, and the gold and silver vessels never used except in the house of prayer, were handled as cups in a drinking bout.

Sacred to Jehovah, the God of wnom no image could be made, intended for the service of Him who was the Judge of the whole earth,

and whose presence could be felt but never seen, these bowls were profaned by the coarse toasts given by Belshazzar and his guests to their stupid, senseless gods of wood and stone.

"Nebo and Bel, are they not mighty?" shouted the king. "Let all give praise to these our gods!"

"Let us sing to the god of good luck and make merry over the wondrous beauty of our idols," chimed in the nobles.

The few Hebrew guests present said nothing at this desecration of the temple's gold and silver vessels; nor did they join in the toast to the helpless idols these Babylonians called upon.

"Why?" you ask.

Because seventy years among these heathen people had taught them that gods of wood and stone had no power, and that Jehovah was a living God even if He could not be seen. When they had trusted in Him, they had proved that His promises were true, but the stupid images made by the Chaldeans had never done any good to anyone.

You may be wondering what the difference is between golden idols and golden bowls.

"Gold is gold," you say, "whether it is an idol or a dish."

True, but they were used differently. A gun is not a bad thing when it is used aright, but we all know what a terrible thing it can be when it is used in a wrong way. So with the Israelites of long ago; in their temple whenever they used their golden vessels they thought of Jehovah as a God of mercy, justice, aud truth. The heathen idols meant vengeance and cruelty, gods that really were no better than the people who worshiped them.

Babylon had treated Israel well; the captive people had enjoyed every advantage of the Chaldean schools. Every avenue of business was open to them, and many of them had grown wealthy, while some occupied positions of authority in the kingdom. One thing, however, they dared not do except among themselves; that was, to speak of Jehovah.

Belshazzar thought that the worship of Israel's God had been crushed. Poor, stupid king, as dull as the idols he worshiped! You boys and girls, I know, are saying the same thing and asking with me, "Could n't he see

that Jehovah was the almighty power of intelligence and that the Babylonian gods were the weakness of foolishness?"

The foolish king! Why don't I call him wicked? Because foolishness and wickedness here mean the same thing, and it makes little difference which word we use.

Stop for a moment and think. Are good thoughts ever foolish thoughts, and are wise actions ever wicked actions?

Belshazzar watched his Hebrew guests as he and his lords drank from the golden goblets taken from the temple. They do not object or even seem angry; surely **they** do not care, thought the king.

"Why, of course they don't care," you are saying. "They know the seventy years have passed, and that even while the king is drinking, the deliverer of Israel, who is to restore them to their city and to their country, is standing outside the gates of Babylon."

"More wine, more wine!" cried the king and his guests. "What city is as glorious as Babylon and what gods are as great as ours?" The wine was poured as king and people lifted

their flagons, singing; "Let us honor the golden idols and those of wood and stone, that they may live forever!"

A wind whistling through the palace halls made the flames of the torches leap upward, flicker, and then go out. One single candlestick gleamed in the darkness, making radiant the wall against which it stood. Swiftly before the eyes of Belshazzar the fingers of a man's hand wrote upon the plaster: "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin."

These words were from the learned language of the Chaldeans, the tongue in which their sciences and their religion were written, and the wise men should have known what they were.

The people looked at one another as if asking, "Is there no one here who can read this message?"

Poor, miserable king, what had he been doing all his life that he could not read the learned tongue of his own people?

I think I can hear you children say, "He had n't been doing anything but giving feasts and having a good time," and I believe you are right.

Only a few minutes before the words were written on the wall Belshazzar had been singing his own praises. Now watch him. Is it not pitiable to see the mighty monarch shaking and quivering on his throne, his teeth chattering, and his knees knocking together as he implores his servants to go out and ask the wise men of Babylon to come and interpret the writing?

They came at his call, but they could not help him. The four words were clear enough: "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin" meant "Numbered, Numbered, Weighed, and Divided."

But what their message was and why they were on the wall the wise men could not tell.

Then the queen spoke, saying, "There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom . . . . were found in him; and the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father . . . . made him master of the magicians . . . . Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation."

As he entered Belshazzar's presence Daniel only glanced at the frightened king, the white-faced guests, the golden goblets of the temple

overturned on the floor, which was red with wine. His eyes were fixed upon the handwriting upon the wall, and I do not doubt that if the king and his lords could have heard what the prophet was saying as his lips moved and a light shone in his face, it would have been the words, "Great is Jehovah and greatly to be praised!"

Belshazzar raised his hand to silence the people as Daniel spoke these words: "Thou . . . . Belshazzar, hast not humbled thy heart . . . thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold . . . . and the God in whose hands thy breath is . . . .hast thou not glorified."

The king and his court leaned forward listening. What sound was that which fell upon the ears of all in the palace and made Daniel pause as he interpreted the mystery of the words upon the wall? Only a threatening murmur in the distance, but it caused the hearts of Belshazzar and his lords to sicken and the soldiers to stiffen their hold upon their swords. A sigh which was almost a moan broke from the lips of the king and his company. The sound grew louder as they listened. They knew it well,

they had heard it often, and they gloried in it when it came from the people they had conquered.

Again the king commanded silence as Daniel drew closer to him and continued speaking. The people were uneasy. They wished to know the meaning of those words, but that murmur which every moment grew louder and was more like a roar than a whisper, had frightened them as much as had those four short words staring at them from the wall.

"This is the interpretation of the thing," said Daniel. "Mene: God hath numbered thy kingdom, and brought it to an end. Tekel: thou are weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. Peres: thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."

Babylon the mighty, that had destroyed others, was now herself to be destroyed. Wickedness is a game by which even the winner must at last perish. With the measure she had meted to others she was now to be measured.

The proud city trusted in her massive walls and had never stopped to think that the cunning of her enemy might ever try to break them

down. Without a rupture made in her walls and her gates still barred, Babylon was taken.

How? While Belshazzar was looking at his walls the Persian king was watching the river which flowed through Babylon. "Drain off the waters and let my army in through the river bed," the Persian had commanded his soldiers—and the work was done.

"If those Babylonians were as smart as they thought they were, why didn't they notice that the water in the river was being drawn off?" you ask me.

For a very simple reason. You see, the city kept thinking only of its strong points, while Cyrus the Persian thought of Babylon's weak points.

What were those weak points?

Perhaps the greatest of them was—and I am sure every girl and boy will agree with me—the Babylonians' belief that no one knew as much as they did. Another was the king's love of feasting and drinking, and what people now call "having a good time."

Cyrus knew this and waited for the great religious festival when Babylon's king and his

"thousand lords" would forget everything but the magnificent feast, and all the people of the city were being entertained.

While Babylon was making a noise with her drunken songs the Persians were silent, but they were at work. No sentry was on the walls, no watchmen by the gates, the night was black, the soldiers not on guard, for was not this a holiday for mighty Babylon?

The waters had made no noise as they disappeared. One—two—three soldiers of the Persian host slipped through the water gates, then little groups, and at last the whole army with its king. The war cry of victory and the answer of despair from Babylon's people was the murmur which had reached Belshazzar's ears as he waited for Daniel to tell him the meaning of the handwriting on the wall.

"In that night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain," and "fallen, fallen is Babylon; and all the graven images of her gods are broken unto the ground."

What became of captive Israel? Her people returned to Jerusalem, they rebuilt its walls, repaired the temple, and found the long lost

Book of the Law. Seventy years in Babylon had cured Israel of the worship of idols. As little groups of people journeyed homeward toward Jerusalem they sang a song of praise to Jehovah and promised to serve Him only. If you will read the One Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm you will know the song the happy people sang on their homeward way.

Toiling up the steep slopes of Jerusalem they came; some paused in the valley below and looked up at the ruined city standing on the heights. No glistening golden roof greeted them; there was no sound of joy. Shattered walls and ruined temple met their eyes. It was night when Nebuchadnezzar's army entered Jerusalem, and it was in the darkness of night that she fell.

As the wanderers in the valley and on the slopes gazed at the city now warm in the morning sun, ruined though Jerusalem was, they felt that she should be rebuilt, and in the glory of the golden morning their lips repeated Isaiah's words: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee."